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**Crime, Community, Context & Fear:
influences on informal social control in an
affluent English suburb**

by

Graham John Steventon

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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Contents

	Page
List of Figures	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Declaration	viii
Abstract	ix

Introduction

Rationale	1
Aims of the research	3
Structure of the thesis	4

Chapter 1 ‘A world of uncertainty’ Suburbs, social change and continuities

Introduction	8
Puppets on a string?	11
The duality of structure	13
Knowledgeability and consciousness	14
Rules and resources	15
Routines and critical situations	15
Position-practices	16
Power	16
Continuity and change	17
The preserve of the wealthy	22
A culture of individualism	24
Status, lifestyle and home ownership	27
Anxieties of affluence	32
‘Internal danger, external threat’	33
Economic insecurities	37

'Doomsday scenario'	41
Conclusion	42
 Chapter 2 Telling it like it is? Research methodology	
Introduction	44
The dilemmas of ethnography	46
A 'knowable world'	47
Competing realities	48
Holy Trinity	49
A future for ethnography?	50
A rationale for ethnography	51
'Interrogative techniques'	52
The research process	55
'A conflict of values'	56
A small market town	58
A different agenda	61
Curves, cobbles and Lleylandii	62
Making contact	67
A change of mind	71
'On the margins'	73
Little sign of life	74
'The Lord can take me'	77
Working 'up' and working 'down'	79
Protecting confidentiality	84
Conclusion	86

Chapter 3 ‘Keeping themselves to themselves’

Community and Identity

Introduction	88
Defining community	88
A ‘real community’	94
‘Everybody keeps to themselves’	97
‘Everybody joins in’	100
Constructing identity	102
‘ <i>The</i> residential area’	104
‘A bit posh’	107
‘Genuinely nice people’	108
‘Them lot over there’	110
A narrow view of crime	115
Excluding difference	116
‘That kind of family in our area’	117
‘An awful shindig’	120
Conclusion	121

Chapter 4 ‘Hanging out down the local park’

The ‘problem’ of youths

Introduction	123
The ‘demonisation’ of youth	125
The play area	129
‘Not from this community’	134
Vested interests	136
‘Conflicting communities’	137
Hard graft	140
Part of the community?	141
‘Kids throwing stones’	143
‘A frightening guy’	144

‘Gonna get bottled’	147
Conclusion	149

Chapter 5 Frightening place, dangerous world

Fear of crime

Introduction	150
Fear of crime	153
Bad news is good news	161
‘A bag of nerves’	163
‘Neighbours from hell’	165
‘An empty place’	166
Between the living and the dead	167
Deeper anxieties	169
Fear from isolation	170
The effects of affluence	172
Busy lives	175
Effects of the suburban environment	178
‘Broken windows’ and the rationality of fear	183
The continuum of fear	185
Conclusion	188

Chapter 6 Preserving peace and tranquillity

Crime control

Introduction	190
Physical fragmentation	192
A ‘defended neighbourhood’	194
‘Cocooned....with six foot fences’	197
Social fragmentation	199
Lock the doors and turn on the alarm	201

Structural, cultural and ideological controls	208
Sarah and Vicky	211
‘We’re kinda streetwise’	211
‘Honour among thieves’	213
Playing the game	215
Community controls	217
Conclusion	220

Chapter 7 ‘Balaclavas and baseball bats?’

Conclusion

Introduction	222
Suburban paradox	223
Implications for community crime prevention	224
The future of crime control	228
‘Balaclavas and baseball bats’	230
‘A gate....on the end’	231
The tide turning back?	234
Social and spatial alternatives?	239
Shared morals and values	239
Responsive environments	242
Market forces	244
Endnote	245

References	246
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Methodological Appendix

Introduction	272
Linking the research methods	272
An interview strategy	273
The researcher as a stranger	275

List of figures

		Page
Figure 1	The research setting: Minington	60
Figure 2	The research setting: Uppenhall	64
Figure 3	People and places	65
Figure 4	Hierarchical coding in NUD*IST	82
Figure 5	Matrix intersect search in NUD*IST	83
Figure 6	The Willow Close play area	130
Figure 7	Crime figures for Uppenhall and Millfields	155
Figure 8	Relative crime risks for residents of different ACORN neighbourhood groups	156
Figure 9	Fear and motivation: the continuum of fear	187

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

Based on ethnographic research, involving observations, participant observation and in-depth interviews, this thesis explores the impact of crime and the influences on informal social control in an affluent, middle class suburb. The research focused on the interaction between estate design, the environment, social and community life, and fear of crime, and their effects on residents in the neighbourhood. Despite low recorded crime rates, crime was perceived to be a problem. This situation arose from a paradox of community dynamics which, on the one hand, increased fear of crime, but on the other, contained crime. Apart from small-scale and extremely localised solidarities, a socially fragmented community existed in which limited and loose-knit local social networks, strong desires for privacy, and atomisation prevailed. These factors, coupled with busy lifestyles and features of the suburban environment, resulted in isolation and enhanced fear of crime.

However, fear arose more from concerns about crime in wider society together with general anxieties rooted in change in late-modernity, than actual risk of victimisation. Crime control was rarely based on community action, instead being individualistic and reliant on sophisticated target hardening. Low crime, therefore, was less attributable to the pursuits of 'active citizens' envisaged by community crime prevention policies and more to structural processes of affluence, status and property ownership which created an exclusive and exclusionary community of vested interest, common identity and shared values. As a study of affluent suburban life, the research contributes to the community studies tradition. However, the main importance of the research is its implications for community crime prevention. By highlighting the complex and contextual nature of informal social control and the influences which impact on it, the necessity to tailor crime prevention more to local needs is emphasised.

Introduction

This thesis explores an area of the sociology of communities and crime about which relatively little is known. Based on ethnographic research the thesis studies the impact of crime and the nature of informal social control in an affluent, middle-class suburban neighbourhood in a small English Midlands town. Using observation, participant observation and in-depth taped interviews, the research focused on the interaction between estate design, the environment, social and community life, and fear of crime, and their effects on residents in the neighbourhood. These factors are thought to be important influences on informal social control and crime.

Rationale

The fact that crime and fear of crime operate on a continuum across the whole social spectrum affecting affluent as well as deprived areas (Mayhew et al 1993) is rarely considered important. Instead researchers have mainly concentrated their attention on poor neighbourhoods, particularly local authority housing estates with low income families and high crime rates. This focus on one extreme of crime has meant that studies in low crime areas are almost non-existent and their potential contribution to our knowledge of crime and informal social control largely negated. The few studies which do focus on affluent, low-crime areas (Girling et al 2000; Loader et al 1999; Taylor 1995) concentrate on people's perceptions of crime, articulated in their crime-talk, rather than informal social control. Shapland and Vagg (1988) provided valuable insight into informal social control but their study involved both urban and rural areas, thereby lacking the in-depth and detailed focus on the specificities of locale that can be achieved in one setting.

An appreciation of how communities deal with crime and fear in low crime areas, however, may not only add to our wider understanding of the complexities of informal social control, particularly its importance in areas

subjected to high levels of crime, but may also facilitate the improvement of community crime prevention strategies in general. Too often community-based strategies are founded on generalised principles, such as the notion of collective responsibility embodied in the image of 'community' (Walklate 1991), which fail to work adequately at local levels because they are not tailored to the specific needs of very local areas (Johnston 1991). My focus on informal social control in a low crime suburban setting therefore places my study at the forefront of current criminological research.

The study also extends our knowledge about affluent, middle-class suburban life and therefore forms a valuable contribution to the community studies tradition. Many classic community studies of the 1950s and 1960s concentrated on the working class in urban and suburban locations (eg. Willmott and Young 1960; Willmott 1963; Young and Willmott 1957). Although some studies involved both middle and working classes (eg. Gans 1967; Pahl 1965; Stacey 1960), it is important to remember that more than thirty years have elapsed since they were conducted and times have changed. More contemporary writing on suburbia has tended to focus on theoretical and ideological critiques (eg. Chaney 1997; Silverstone 1997). However, as increased affluence is fragmenting social class divisions and resulting in a burgeoning middle class (Abercrombie et al 1988; Saunders 1990b), research in affluent sectors of society becomes ever more pertinent.

Following the great interest in community studies during the mid-1900s the genre drifted out of favour by the 1970s due to criticisms regarding lack of theoretical and methodological rigour (Anderson 1994; Crow 2000; Crow and Allan 1994; Hoggett 1997; Payne 1993). While these studies were rich in descriptive detail the analysis was flawed, portraying undifferentiated and non-conflictual community settings which ignored the effects of structural

inequality and the wider context of social change (Hoggett 1997). However, as Foster (1999) points out, the community studies tradition is far from dead. Community studies remain an effective medium for the development of sociological arguments not least because they illustrate the importance of local social phenomena in their wider contexts (Crow 2000). As part of the recent renaissance in community research (see for instance Foster 1999; Girling et al 2000; Taylor et al 1996), my study situates the everyday lives of the inhabitants of one suburb in broader theoretical debates about social inclusion and exclusion and social, political and cultural change.

Aims of the research

The principal aim of the research was to explore the dynamics of informal social control and the social and physical influences which impact upon it. Dense social networks (Bursik 1986), community cohesion (Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994) and territoriality (Newman 1973) are all thought to precipitate informal social control, while environmental neglect and fear of crime are claimed to have the opposite effect (Skogan 1986; Wilson and Kelling 1982).

Some researchers have placed great emphasis on the role of design and residential planning in crime reduction (eg. Coleman 1985; 1987; Newman 1973; Poyner and Webb 1991). Indeed, environmental design has become an established part of crime prevention policy (see for instance Department of the Environment 1994). However, the approach has also been heavily criticised for its determinism (Bottoms and Wiles 1992; Hillier 1986; Steventon 1994; 1996) and for not taking account of social factors such as resident dynamics and demography (Merry 1981; Smith 1987). Moreover, estate design may simply satisfy desires for exclusiveness and exclusion (Sennett 1971), and reinforce paranoid fear of strangers and crime (Baumgartner 1988).

The effects of fear of crime and environmental neglect are also unclear. Existing theory links fear to cues of neighbourhood decline which negatively impact on informal social control allowing petty crime and subsequently more serious crime to flourish (Skogan 1986; Wilson and Kelling 1982). In some circumstances policy has reinforced formal controls by directing police effort towards petty crime and incivility (see for instance Bratton 1997; Dennis and Mallon 1997), but often neglects the environmental decline and its effects on the morale of residents (Pollard 1997). Yet adverse physical conditions and high crime levels do not necessarily lead to fear of crime or weakened informal social control (Foster 1995), and high crime can occur in areas which do not suffer neglect (Mayhew et al 1993).

The fundamental question to be addressed therefore is to what extent informal social control is important in controlling crime. The consensus appears to be that informal social control *is* important (Brewer et al 1998; Bursik 1986; Foster 1995; Jacobs 1961; Shapland and Vagg 1988; Skogan 1986), yet the relationship so often simplified is very complex. Baumgartner's (1988) research in an affluent suburban area, for example, found that weak social control and fear of crime did not lead to high incidence of crime. Baumgartner's findings suggest the need to understand informal social control as a complex interrelationship of factors which vary according to different specificities of location, rather than a universal panacea for crime prevention.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 focuses on two themes: social integration and exclusion; and social, political and cultural change. Since it is important to investigate wider social processes at all levels of society (Foster 1999; Urry 1995), structuration theory (Giddens 1984) is used as an analytical tool for understanding the influences of both structure and agency. The chapter argues that globalising change in late

modernity reinforces social inequalities, bringing opportunity, wealth and power for some sectors of society but at the same time disadvantage, deprivation and marginalisation for others. The suburbs, as historical and ideological sites of privilege, exclusiveness and exclusion, perpetrate social divisions socially and spatially in the everyday actions of their residents. The spatial patterning of inequality, and the uncertainties of a rapidly changing world, create insecurities among the affluent which result in increasingly exclusive practices to protect identity and secure investment.

Chapter 2 provides a reflexive account of the research methodology. Critiques of ethnography, involving objectivity, validity and reliability, and more recently legitimacy regarding the diminishing importance of localities under globalisation (Brewer 2000), are acknowledged. However, I argue that ethnography provides an opportunity to examine social processes, interactions, and influences within the research setting which other methods, such as surveys, are unlikely to achieve. I discuss the influence of my background as an architect and my motivation for the research on the research process. I then outline the selection of the research site, introduce the research setting, and address issues arising from the fieldwork and analysis. Finally I highlight ethical issues of confidentiality which apply to my research.

Chapter 3 explores issues of ‘community’ and identity. Despite the appeal of solidarity and social cohesion embodied in the romantic, nostalgic image of traditional communities, weak social ties, busy working and leisure routines and desires for privacy resulted in an individualised, atomised and fragmented social environment. A sense of ‘community’ derived from a shared identity characterised by physical, social and structural boundaries and fear of outside intrusion. Crime was seen as stereotypically arising from other areas, such as the council estates in the town. The contrast between the tranquillity and

‘purity’ of the suburb and the danger and disorder outside reinforced the exclusive identity of the suburb and also protected material and emotional investment in the area.

Chapter 4 develops the issues of intrusion and threat to identity raised in the previous chapter. The chapter focuses on youths, who are viewed as a threat locally because of their association with crime and disorder, and in a wider context in the way they represent the moral decline of society. Socio-spatial aspects of protectionism, fear and power are investigated by focusing on a play area in the locality in which youths gathered. The presence and actions of the youths threatened the peaceful and tranquil image of the area and the material and emotional investment of residents. However, the fragmented social and spatial structure of the area precluded a unified collective effort in dealing with the youths and the perceived loss of control had a disempowering effect for some residents.

Chapter 5 focuses on fear of crime. High fear of crime in the context of low crime rates in suburbs seems contradictory and might suggest fears are irrational. However, I question the validity of rationality as a means of interpreting fear. Instead, fear represents an expression of a complex interrelationship of insecurities which arise from both micro-contextual and wider, diffuse factors. Some fears arose as a result of the isolating effects of the fragmented physical and social environment. Others stemmed from aspects of personal biographies which, when fuelled by the media or local myth and rumour, were translated into fear of crime. However, fear was not simply de-motivating; there appeared to be a threshold up to which fear could stimulate a community response to crime. The chapter concludes that the negative view of fear portrayed in the rationality debate does not acknowledge its positive potential. Fear needs to be re-conceptualised and seen as operating

on a continuum, whereby it can motivate social action, rather than simply demotivate and lead to withdrawal from social life.

Chapter 6 considers how the socio-spatial factors discussed in the preceding chapters impact on informal social control. I note a paradox of community dynamics which, on the one hand, increased fear of crime, but on the other, contained crime. Social and physical fragmentation militated against effective community action. Instead crime control was individualistic and reliant on sophisticated target hardening. Low crime, therefore, was less attributable to the pursuits of 'active citizens' envisaged by community crime prevention policies and more to structural processes of affluence, status and property ownership which created an exclusive and exclusionary community of vested interest, common identity and shared values.

Chapter 7 draws together the issues arising from the previous chapters and discusses their implications for community crime prevention policies and future crime control. Communitarianism and permeable public realms are examined as two potential solutions to the social divisions and inequities reflected in the suburban way of life. Communitarianism is criticised for emphasising shared values on which suburbia is predicated, rather than the confrontation and acceptance of difference. Permeable public realms may remove barriers to crime in some circumstances, but they offer a more equitable urban environment than enclaves which encourage exclusive and exclusionary attitudes. However, the power of structural processes such as the property market in reinforcing people's preferences are acknowledged, although governmental pressures towards higher density developments on urban 'brownfield' sites may yet challenge suburban growth. Finally future research possibilities are highlighted.

Chapter 1

‘A world of uncertainty’

Suburbs, social change and continuities

Introduction

This chapter establishes a theoretical context for my research within the themes of social integration and exclusion and social, political and cultural change. In *Change in British Society* A. H. Halsey (1995) argued the need to understand both change and continuity. This chapter is therefore concerned with change and continuity in the context of juxtapositions: of affluence and deprivation; empowerment and disempowerment; advantage and disadvantage; the global and the local.

Despite immense social transformations in the twentieth century affecting all sectors of society (Halsey 1995), continuities are apparent in the ideals which underpin the suburban way of life. These continuities take the form of suburban aspirations which perpetuate social divisions. They reflect the inequality of social change which favours the affluent and marginalises the poor (Saunders 1990b). However, these processes also impact on the affluent. Notwithstanding the ‘world of uncertainty’ which dramatic change creates (Foster 1999: 314), this process of social exclusion results in the poor being ‘shut out of effective participation in mainstream society’ (Saunders 1990b: 122). Yet they remain a threat and a source of fear to the affluent, ‘a problem to be policed and contained’ (Saunders 1990b: 123).

Until the end of the seventeenth century European suburbs were sites of exile and alienation on the outskirts of urban centres (Archer 1997). Transformations in society between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries saw an agrarian, feudal society give way to industrialism, capitalism and the growth of the nation state (France and Wiles 1998; Kingdom 1992; Naslas 1976). With the advent of capitalism the suburbs became ‘sophisticated and purposeful instruments for the realization of specific social practices and relations’ (Archer 1997: 27). They articulated key developments in European culture: social and economic

differentiation; political redefinition of property; possessive individualism; and the aesthetic portrayal of the self (Archer 1997).

These developments have consolidated throughout the twentieth century, but like 'velocity of movement' (Bauman 2000: 9), at an increasingly accelerated and unprecedented rate (Giddens 1991a). The latter part of the twentieth century - referred to as late modernity (Giddens 1991a), or postmodernity (see for instance Lash and Urry 1994) - signifies 'the most massive current of social, economic and technological change' (Young 1999: 193). One aspect of that change is the emergence of an 'international society' through the process of globalisation (Luard 1990). As Robins (1997, quoted in Woodward 1997: 16) points out, globalisation involves 'an increasing transnationalization of economic and cultural life' which is replacing the old structures of national states and communities. Globalisation brings choice and greater freedom through individualism and individualisation, but at the same time it produces inequalities of economic status, ethnicity, location and gender (Massey 1994; O'Brien and Jones 1996).

Suburbanisation socially and spatially reflects these inequalities in society. While suburban living is not solely a middle class phenomenon (Clapson 1998; Thorns 1972), it has largely benefited the more affluent sectors of society (Archer 1997; Girouard 1985; Silverstone 1997). For example, economic restructuring brought about by globalisation has either facilitated the gentrification (Harloe and Fainstein 1992), or suburbanisation (see for instance Holyoak 1993) of inner-city areas, or it has led to the decentralisation and out-migration of business from urban to suburban locations (Clapson 1998; Fainstein and Harloe 1992; Harloe and Fainstein 1992).

Coupled with a decline in manufacturing industry and growth in the service sector, the suburbanisation of commercial activities has reinforced social divisions (Fainstein and Harloe 1992; Logan et al 1992). Poor inner-urban residential areas become isolated from sources of employment where residents lack the resources to travel to new job locations (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; Lash and Urry 1994). Thus suburbanisation, globalisation and social change combine to form an excluding process in which the poor are separated off in 'pockets of poverty and deprivation', and there is no motivation to integrate them into mainstream society (Young 1999: 20).

Globalisation, and the social transformations that accompany it, have also had consequences for individual and place-based identities (Woodward 1997). Woodward (1997), for example, argues that global marketing has led to a certain cultural homogeneity which is unrelated to place. Citing the fast food industry as an example, Ritzer (1996: 1) defines this cultural change as 'McDonaldization', 'a process of rationalisation in 'which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world'. One effect of a globalised culture is to loosen place-bound identities (Woodward 1997). Another is the disembedding of social relations from local contexts and their re-articulation across wide time-space distances (Giddens 1991a).

My central argument in this chapter is that these social transformations impact on suburban life in two fundamental ways. They create greater opportunities for the affluent but also bring instability and insecurity which 'exacerbate middle-class anxiety' (Harloe and Fainstein 1992: 265). They also reinforce existing, and encourage the emergence of new, identities (Woodward 1997), such as the new suburban social movements which are directed at 'the defence of the privileges to which the socially and economically successful believe they are entitled' (Taylor

1996: 317). The combination of existential anxieties (Giddens 1991a) and the desire to protect identities is expressed socially and spatially in defensive and exclusive attitudes relating to place (see for instance Sibley 1995; Suttles 1972; Wilson 1997).

Puppets on a string?

Although there is a tendency to see social change and its effects largely at a structural or macrosocial level, as Foster (1999: 315) notes, in order to 'make sense of urban change we need....to consider the local and global simultaneously'. It is necessary to consider the important part played by individuals and particular localities in wider social processes. Giddens' (1984) structuration theory offers a means of conceptualising change 'more imaginatively than the rather simplistic divide' between structure and agency (Foster 1999: 316). In the structuration approach, according to Giddens (1991b: 203), 'social theory does not 'begin' either with the individual or with society ...the core concern of the social sciences is with recurrent social practices and their transformations'. By its conceptualisation of the relationship between 'structure' and 'agency', structuration theory provides a means of synthesising macro and microsocial issues (Bottoms 1993).

Acknowledging the fact that structures and institutions do have a certain degree of determination and regulation in relation to human action (Walsh 1998) should not imply that we inhabit a world, as envisaged by Durkheim, in which human beings are 'cogs in a machine or puppets on a string' (Walsh 1998: 15), where social structures totally dominate and control the actions of individuals. Individuals 'can and do make sense of their social environment, exercise choices in relation to it and modify it in a whole variety of ways' (Walsh 1998: 15). However, as Giddens (1984; 1991b) points out, neither the experience of the individual, nor the existence of any form of societal totality should take

precedence. This is because 'neither the agent nor the structure truly 'exists' independently of one another....both are bound up in the very reproduction of each other' (Farrall and Bowling 1999: 255). Put another way, the concept of structuration expresses, through the duality of structure, '*the mutual dependence of structure and agency*' (Giddens 1979: 69 - italics in original). Structures are thus both the medium and the outcome of the conduct of individuals conceptualised as 'social practices ordered across space and time' (Giddens 1984: 2).

Structuration theory has been criticised, mainly because of its reliance on the duality of structure as opposed to 'analytical dualism' as a methodological device (Archer 1982: 477; Willmott 1999: 7). Some critics question whether the duality of structure can resolve the dualism of agency and structure as Giddens claims, and indeed whether such dualism can be resolved at all (see for instance Sica 1991). Anthias (1999: 158) argues that the structure-agency debate is philosophical, or meta-theoretical, and rather than become absorbed with questions that have no easy answers, it is more useful to elicit from it the general principle: 'that individuals make choices...and that their choices are related to their personal experience which takes place within a set of interactions with others that themselves have organisational and representational components that cannot be reduced to individuals themselves'. This approach neither reifies structures, nor reduces social relations to agency (Anthias 1999).

Structuration theory's benefit lies not in its power as a social theory but more as a useful framework for 'understanding social change that occurs simultaneously on a variety of levels' (Foster 1999: 316) and the way structures and individuals interact and influence social processes (Bottoms 1993). It also 'provides cues for the unravelling of socio-spatial relationships' (Sibley 1995: 74). Structuration theory is particularly applicable to the context of my research because, as Farrall

and Bowling note (1999: 255 - italics in original), it is 'a strong basis for the interpretation of *experiences* of crime (eg. episodes of offending, victimization and anxiety) as they are experienced by individuals and communities'. While the overall framework of structuration theory is useful in the consideration of broad questions of social organisation and transformation, Giddens envisages that in 'more confined areas of empirical research' it could be selectively used as a series of 'sensitizing devices' to test research questions or interpret findings' (Giddens 1991b: 213). This is how I have used structuration theory.

Structuration theory outlines 'a wide range of concepts - rule and resource, regionalisation, routinisation, recursiveness, distanciation, locale and created environment, amongst many others' (O' Brien 1999: 20). I have not set out here a detailed discussion of all of the concepts since others have comprehensively done so elsewhere (see Bottoms 1993; Bryant and Jary 1991; 2000). Instead, I briefly outline the aspects of structuration theory which apply in my discussions in this and the chapters that follow.

The duality of structure

I have already mentioned duality of structure which is central to structuration theory. Giddens (1991b: 204) maintains that the duality of structure 'encapsulates the recursive elements of social life so fundamental to social organization and change' since 'social activities regularly reconstitute the circumstances that generated them in the first place'. Structuration theory thus offers 'a conceptual scheme that allows one to understand both how actors are at the same time the creators of social systems yet created by them....it is an attempt to provide the conceptual means of analyzing the often delicate and subtle interlacings of reflexively organized action and institutional constraint' (Giddens 1991b: 204). Giddens (1984) conceptualises structures as both the medium and outcome of the conduct of individuals. As I aim to show in chapter 3, suburbia, understood as a

particular social system, is the medium through which individuals exercise exclusive practices, and at the same time it is the outcome of those practices.

Knowledgeability and consciousness

According to Giddens (1984), humans are knowledgeable and reflexive agents, meaning that they understand and can account for much of the activities that make up their daily lives. This they do through two levels of consciousness: 'discursive consciousness' (Giddens 1984: 290) or reflexive monitoring of action - what actors are able to say about the conditions of their own action; and practical consciousness, involving rationalisation of action - what actors know tacitly about the conditions of their own action but are unable to articulate. Knowledgeability is bounded on one side by unconscious motives or cognition and on the other by unacknowledged conditions which give rise to unintended consequences of action (Giddens 1984 - see also Bryant and Jary 1991). Unconsciousness is important because it accounts for practical action without the obligation for actors to 'talk through' their actions before enacting them, which would make action in the social world impossible (Lemert 1999).

As Bryant and Jary (1999: 8) point out, 'all three levels of action and consciousness are potentially implicated in the production and reproduction of social systems, and....notwithstanding the existence of unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences, any model that seeks to explain social systems simply in terms of unintended reproduction is unbalanced'. Because knowledgeability and consciousness are epistemological concepts which enable people to account for their actions, they influence the methodological aspects of the research process (see chapter 2).

Rules and resources

While 'system' and 'structure' have been used more or less interchangeably in social theory, they are given different meanings in structuration theory (Bottoms 1993). 'Structure' is termed as 'rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems' (Giddens 1984: 377). Rules are 'the everyday guidelines which allow individuals to continue their day to day existences', while resources are 'something that actors can rely upon and use in achieving certain ends' (Farrall and Bowling 1999: 256). Rules and resources allow the structuring aspects of society to be both constraining and enabling (Farrall and Bowling 1999). 'System' in structuration theory relates to 'the patterning of social relations across time-space, understood as reproduced practices' (Giddens 1984: 377).

Routines and critical situations

Routines make up the larger part of daily activity and thus the continuity of social life (Bottoms 1993). In addition, routines provide 'a sense of security and of wellbeing' (Farrall and Bowling 1999: 257). Giddens (1991a: 40) stresses, however, that 'emphasising the interdependence of taken-for-granted routines and ontological security does not mean that a sense of 'the beneficence of things' derives from a dogged adherence to habit'. In this statement Giddens implies that there is an element of creativity in routine action: 'the practical mastery of how to 'go on' in the contexts of social life is not inimical to creativity, but presumes it and is presumed by it' (Giddens 1991a: 41).

Converse to routines are critical situations, or 'fateful moments' (Giddens 1991a: 202), which are 'events.... characterized by the radical disruption of routines (which incorporate a corrosive effect upon the normal behaviours of the actor concerned), leading to anxiety or fear' (Farrall and Bowling 1999: 257). They force an individual to rethink fundamental aspects of her or his existence and

future plans (Giddens 1991a). But, as Farrall and Bowling (1999) note, critical situations can also lead to positive opportunities for changes in behaviour. The interaction of routines and critical situations can be seen in behaviours which are adopted to maintain or restore a sense of security under the threat or experience of crime.

Position-practices

Each social identity describes an appropriate set of roles for other members of the same social identity and Giddens (1984: 282) refers to these as ‘position-practice relations’. Thus, position-practices are associated with ‘normative rights, obligations and sanctions which, within specific collectivities, form roles (Giddens 1984: 282). I shall argue later (see chapter 6) that position-practices can be seen in the collective norms which operate to maintain a coherent social identity, despite the atomised nature of the community, in the suburban area of my research.

Power

‘Power is the means for getting things done and, as such, is directly implied in human action (Giddens 1984: 293). According to Farrall and Bowling (1999: 256), this definition of power relates to an individual or group’s ‘ability to be able to ‘structure’ the behaviour of themselves and others, and to be able to resist the ‘structuring’ capabilities of others’. However, as Farrall and Bowling (1999) note, Giddens’ definition of power neglects the differential of power in which some agents are less able to resist the structuring forces they are subject to, as in social divisions and inequality which I shall discuss shortly. Farrall and Bowling (1999) also note the power differential that exists for individuals across their lifecourse. Goodey (1997) provides an illustration of this power differential in relation to the lifecourse in her discussion of hegemonic masculinity. She argues that the greatest power is wielded by white, middle-class males in their prime,

and yet they may experience the disempowering effects of fear in adolescence and old age.

I use these concepts critically, bringing to bear other perspectives which impact on my analysis, but which structuration theory neglects. For example, Anthias (1999: 164) is critical of the way Giddens' autonomous, reflexive self 'does not encourage a focus on both unique and shared contexts of identification', which seem important in my own analysis. Furthermore, as Urry (1991) argues, the one-sided focus of structuration theory on modernisation through distancing results in a lack of detailed reference to variations in local context or 'place'. Urry states: 'When (Giddens) talks of place as such it is seen as given or fixed rather than socially constructed and contested. Locale is viewed as the context for action rather than as the outcome of action' (Urry 1991: 172). In my interpretation of 'place' and its significance for individuals, 'postmodern' tendencies of nostalgia and pastiche are seen as important (Urry 1991). Nevertheless, the use of structuration theory in this critical manner accords with the way Giddens envisages (see for instance Giddens 1991b).

Continuity and change

'Modernity', according to Giddens (1991a: 14), is 'the institutions and modes of behaviour established first of all in post-feudal Europe, but which in the twentieth century increasingly have become world-historical in their impact'. Late modernity is characterised by globalisation which is influencing social change at an unprecedented rate and scale (Giddens 1991a). In pre-modern societies time and space were connected through the situatedness of place (Giddens 1991a). As O'Brien (1999) points out, in traditional societies an individual's daily life largely centres on fairly limited spatial territories, such as hamlets, villages and towns, with limited access to distant persons and events. 'Experience and awareness are always spatially situated and institutions are

grounded in local customs and habits. The world is 'out there', immutable, distant and tangible' (O'Brien 1999: 23).

In the globalised context of modern societies place is only one point of social reference amongst many, since the world has become increasingly accessible to everyone (O'Brien 1999). Space and place become distanced from one another by time-space compression through developments in communications and by increased mobility (Bottoms 1993; Giddens 1984; Massey 1994). As Bauman (2000: 11) notes, 'the advent of cellular telephones may well serve as a symbolic 'last blow' delivered to the dependency on space'. 'The world that used to be 'out there' appears, in modernity, immediately accessible and more or less mutable on a day-to-day basis so that global change and local action become ever more entwined' (O'Brien 1999: 23).

That is not to say that globalisation affects everyone equally. Indeed, Hirst and Thompson (1996) are sceptical about economic globalisation as a coherent concept of a world economy. They argue that there are already historical precedents for major structural changes in global trade. While they acknowledge that the international economy has undergone a radical restructuring in late modernity, globalisation tends to be of greater benefit to developed countries (Hirst and Thompson 1996). Massey (1994) challenges the principally economic view of time-space compression. Other factors, such as race and gender, influence people's experience of space and place, highlighting social differentiation and 'the power geometry of time-space compression' (Massey 1994: 149) in the following way:

Different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are

Suburbs, social change and continuities

more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movements, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it'.

(Massey 1994: 149 - italics in original)

For example, those in control of business, media and communications are empowered by time-space compression, while ethnic groups whose culture is appropriated to enhance the lives of people in the developed world, often gain little material benefit themselves and are imprisoned by it (Massey 1994). Social differentiation and inequality are themselves global in scale but seen in extremely localised ways in the cruel juxtaposition that exists between those who are empowered and those who are not. This example of the new 'democracy' of the former Soviet Union poignantly illustrates the point:

The social inequalities of contemporary Moscow are breathtaking. The dispossessed pensioner standing all day outside the metro selling one kipper competes with the stream of shoppers arriving at Gucci. Families condemned by property prices and unpaid salaries to remain in the decaying social housing projects of the soviet era eke out a subsistence living by barter and from cultivation of tiny plots in the surrounding countryside. Suburban Moscow is returning to a peasant economy. Yet within this vast urban allotment, the robber-barons of the new economy live in fortified encampments, protected by private armies and sophisticated security, and travel to the banks and dealing rooms of central Moscow in armour-plated luxury.

(Mull 2000: 112)

Mull's telling vignette emphasises the way in which social change impacts at all levels of society: the 'microsocial sphere' of individuals, families and friends; the mesosocial or 'intermediate community sphere' of local institutions, enterprises and social networks; and the 'macrosocial sphere' of larger organisations and state bureaucracies (Burman, quoted in Giddens 1991b: 214 [see also Foster 1999: 316]). Urban dispersal, where new localities are formed and existing ones altered as a result of the interaction of wider social processes and spatial organisation over time (O'Brien and Jones 1996), is another example of the interplay between these different levels of society under the influence of change. It is a global process inasmuch as 'the development of the suburbs and the consequent spread and decentralization of the city is becoming the predominant

characteristic of urban development in the advanced urban, industrial nations of the world' (Thorns 1972: 75). Yet it also affects individuals and communities in particular localities, for instance by 'disconnecting traditional morphological patterns of urban development where neighbourhood communities previously flourished' (Steventon 1996: 239).

Economic change also impacts on all levels of society. The period of modernity - particularly the post-war period of the 1950s to the 1970s - was what France and Wiles (1998) call inclusive: a period when the state took responsibility for the risk and security of the individual through the welfare system; mass production of goods in manufacturing industries provided high levels of relatively stable employment for a largely male labour force; and the demand for semi-skilled or unskilled labour gave young men 'clear pathways to adult citizenship' where, in what Young (1999: 191) refers to as 'the soft machine of modernity', employers were responsible for the discipline and control of the young through which middle-class values were transmitted to working-class youth (France and Wiles 1998: 61).

The latter half of the twentieth century has, by contrast, become a period of exclusion (France and Wiles 1998; Young 1999). As Halsey (1995: 136) points out: 'Traditional division of labour in classical industrial society is being radically renegotiated - the division of labour, that is, between the sexes, between the classes, between childhood, adulthood, and old age, between the family and the economy, and between the economy and the state'. Social class cleavages have given way to divisions based on interest groups and lifestyle where membership is dependent on the ability to pay the market price (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; 1996b), and integration is dependent on being a consumer (Bauman 1987; Chaney 1996).

At the same time economic changes have threatened financial security across the social spectrum. De-industrialisation, characterised by a decline in manufacturing industry and growth in the service sector has, for example, signalled a move towards economic liberalism (France and Wiles 1998; Halsey 1995; Kingdom 1992; Logan et al 1992; Saunders 1990b). Work has become based on the motto 'no long term' in which 'jobs' are being replaced by 'projects' and 'fields of work' (Sennett 1998: 22). Short term contracts of employment, part-time working and limited career opportunities have reduced income security (France and Wiles 1998). Developments in technology, particularly computers, have produced greater automation which has in turn removed a sizeable proportion of middle income jobs (Young 1999).

Traditionally male areas of employment have been eroded and replaced by jobs which are perceived as female occupations, or have become disproportionately filled by women (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; France and Wiles 1998). As Massey (1994: 187) notes, women's share of the job market in some areas has increased because 'women workers were cheap; they were prepared to accept low wages, the result of years of negotiating in terms of 'the family wage'', and the fact that their previous low levels of incorporation into paid employment meant they were poorly organised in terms of trade unions. Women were also more available than men for part-time work, an effect of the traditional division of labour in the household (Massey 1994).

These transformations have impacted at the level of the individual family. Women's access to employment no doubt will have strained many traditional relationships based on unequal division of labour in the home (Seidler 1997), where men are seen as the breadwinners and women the homemakers (Chambers 1997; Massey 1994). Furthermore, tensions within the family will have resulted from the threat to male identities brought about by increased employment for

women at the expense of employment for men (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; Seidler 1997). These employment trends, and the strains on families which may result, are thought to impact on crime in two ways: a greater frequency of domestic violence (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b), and higher levels of divorce with adverse consequences for the control and socialisation of children (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b; Carlson 1993). (See also Braithwaite's (1993) argument that divorce results from the commodification of fidelity, where marriage becomes another consumer choice with implications for the power of family shaming).

The preserve of the wealthy

Alongside the changes outlined above are also continuities. Roberts (1994: 132) points out that social life rarely changes abruptly and 'the forces of continuity are often as strong as those of change'. For example, the social structural advantages enjoyed by the affluent are embodied in discriminatory practices which secure power through generations (Chaney 1996). Practices, such as the accumulation of capital, and privileges which are a form of capital, enhance the power of the affluent (Chaney 1996). Another source of power is 'socially useful knowledge' (Martin 1998: 666). Distinct forms of knowledge provide what Martin (1998: 666) refers to as 'middle-class power' because they become 'assets' which can be mobilised in the labour market and create a monopoly over some types of employment.

Affluent power achieves socio-spatial continuity in many city enclave and suburban developments. These settings often tend to be sites of privilege for the affluent who have sought to remove or distance themselves from the noise, pollution and overcrowding of cities (Archer 1997; Girouard 1985; Jackson 1991; Pahl 1965; Silverstone 1997). These suburban aspirations have endured almost since the suburbs first came into being (Krieger 1991). Indeed, 'the leafy suburb between city and country is precisely the form of settlement that the

western world has desired since the Enlightenment' (Krieger 1991: 11). The earliest affluent suburbs existed for wealthy colonialists in Chowringhee, Calcutta (Girouard 1985), and although domains on the edge of European cities were originally sites of exile and alienation, they became 'highly desirable, detached, clearly circumscribed, exclusively residential (and generally bourgeois) enclaves' during the Mercantile period of the seventeenth century (Archer 1997: 27).

While in nineteenth century England the philanthropic suburban developments of Saltaire, Bourneville and Port Sunlight were built for the working class, they were nevertheless built as enclaves, separated from the polluted and congested areas of cities in order to attract and retain a healthy workforce (Flinn 1963). They embodied many features of modern suburbia, including quality of houses and spatial layout, low density of occupation and open spaces (Flinn 1963). Even the Garden City of utopian idealist Ebenezer Howard, 'set in its own rural, agricultural garden' (McKean 1980: 235), was a form of 'edge city' which reflected the urban dispersal tendencies of modern suburbia (Clapson 1998). It was also a response to the search for the marriage of nature and culture which is part of suburban ideology (Silverstone 1997).

However, the overriding aspect of continuity in the suburbs, I argue, may be seen in the fact that they are largely the preserve of the wealthy, the globally upwardly mobile and the rising middle classes. Many suburban dwellers strive for physical distance and social distinction from the populations of cities, 'and (are) quick to protect and defend their gains against others who want a share' (Silverstone 1997: 5). Thus, as I have already stated, according to the duality of structure (Giddens 1984; 1991b), the suburbs are both the medium and outcome of individual and collective exclusive practices.

A culture of individualism

Another continuity which has permeated Britain's constitutional history (and indeed in many other western cultures) is individualism (Halsey 1995; Kingdom 1992; Saunders 1990a). According to Kingdom (1992: 6), the ideological principle of individualism argues:

that each person has an identity and character entirely independent of social formations. It is possible to fully comprehend the nature of a person without reference to society. Institutions such as the law courts, the Church and the state have no reality beyond their members and, consequently, have no constitutive part in the nature of the individual. Using this reasoning, the state is nothing more than a set of constraints on the individual.

Acknowledging that this definition of individualism over-emphasises agency and denies structural influences, there is no doubt about the power of individualism as an ideology (Duncan and Duncan 1997). According to Bauman (2000), casting members of society as individuals is the trademark of modern society. It is a process which reflects the duality of structure: 'Modern society exists in its incessant activity of 'individualizing' as much as the daily activities of individuals consist in the daily reshaping and renegotiating of the network of mutual entanglements called 'society'' (Bauman 2000: 31).

As Halsey (1995: 3) argues, 'individualism is built into 'custom and practice', into local workplaces and community organizations, into all commonsensical explanations of why people do what they do'. The political climate of the 1980s - the period of 'Thatcherism' - particularly brought individualism to the fore as a social doctrine (Kingdom 1992). In this period the emphasis was on self-projection and self-preservation in which individuals accepted an atomised, ego-driven view of society on the basis that competitive, self-seeking behaviour leads to a harmonious and agreeable society (Kingdom 1992). Baumgartner's (1988: 3) study of an affluent suburb on the east coast of America reveals the extent to which individualism underpins suburban life and achieves the

objectives that Kingdom (1992) describes. Baumgartner, for example, observed 'a peaceable way of life' which arose from 'fluidity in social relations, a lack of social integration, and relative indifference among people' (Baumgartner 1988: 3).

An individualistic culture is also built on inequality (Halsey 1995), and exclusiveness in which certain sectors of society maintain the control of power under the guise of democracy (Duncan and Duncan 1997; Kingdom 1992). Duncan and Duncan's (1997: 161) research in an American suburban area of Westchester County, near New York, examined the power relationships tied up with 'the suburban politics of exclusion'. They looked at how land use zoning policies of the local government exercised a clear bias in favour of the interests of certain classes. Those whose interests were not served were largely unaware of these practices.

Duncan and Duncan found that education and occupation were important in the way people perceived the amount of control they had over change. Those with a better education and higher levels of occupation subscribed to a pluralist view of power; a view based on 'the idea that all individuals or interest groups have a fairly equal opportunity to influence local government decision-makers who are seen as responsive to the desires of citizens' (Duncan and Duncan 1997: 165). Those with a poorer education and employment subscribed to an elitist view in which 'only politically powerful or elite members of society (were) able to determine change' (Duncan and Duncan 1997: 165). Few people in either group saw institutional structures as constraining their freedom to act. Duncan and Duncan argue that their study illustrates the ideological power of individualism. It also highlights the relationship between individualism and inequality, as I discuss later.

The ethic of individualism is reinforced by individualising processes in society (Lash and Urry 1994). Lash and Urry (1994: 113) point out that while individualisation may be reflexive, as in the aesthetic and expressive consumption of culture, it can be also individuating and atomising, as portrayed by 'niche-marketed' consumerism. According to Beck (1992), individualisation arises from education, mobility and competition. Education provides individuals with greater choice and control over their future. Mobility in the labour market loosens attachment to local social networks which in traditional communities based on local employment were locally rooted. Competition promotes individual effort and can work against community initiatives. As Beck (1992: 94) argues, 'competition undermines the equality of equals without, however, eliminating it. It causes the isolation of individuals within homogeneous social groups'. Competition can undermine class solidarity as seen in 'intersuburban rivalry' - 'communal rivalries that mask common economic position' (Harloe and Fainstein 1992: 263-264).

However, technological advances, such as communications and transportation, also give rise to individualisation. For example, developments in computer technology have changed the way people interact, lifting social relations out of the locale and re-articulating them across wide time-space distances (Giddens 1991a). We now have virtual communities inhabiting cyberspace where the computer is the medium and the means by which people can communicate without ever coming into contact with one another (Burrows 1997; McBeath and Webb 1997). Car use has also had a detrimental influence on social interaction (Chambers 1997; Krier 1991). It has made possible the functional zoning of cities, which in turn has facilitated the growth of suburbia and urban dispersal, reinforcing social fragmentation (Krier 1991).

Status, lifestyle and home ownership

In an individualised society people independently make their own decisions, take risks, bear responsibilities, construct their own identities and operate as enterprising consumers (Lash and Urry 1994). Individuals have the freedom to reflect upon, and find meaning in, the various spheres of social life, which are increasingly culturally laden (Lash and Urry 1994: 60). However, I argue, some people are more able to make decisions and take risks than others, and do not have equal access to consumer culture. The interaction of structure and agency is uneven in that some sectors of the population are constrained by the very structures which enable others. The unequal application of opportunity and constraint is evident in another individualising and individuating aspect of social change, the growth of consumer society and particularly the commodification of housing.

There have been broad benefits from consumerism. For example, consumerism is predicated on a general rise in affluence in an upwardly mobile society (Saunders 1990b). Increased affluence has in turn allowed more sectors of society into property ownership (Saunders 1990a). Until the beginning of the twentieth century home ownership was the preserve of the upper classes while the majority of the middle classes were tenants in private rented accommodation (Hamnett 1995). By the 1990s two thirds of households in Britain had become owner-occupied (Hamnett 1995; Saunders 1990b) signifying a major distribution of wealth in the housing sector from public to private (Saunders 1990b).

These changes have also reinforced social divisions (Hamnett 1995; Saunders 1990a; 1990b). As Saunders (1990b: 37) acknowledges, increasing private property ownership is 'creating a new 'large middle stratum' of small property owners in between the few who own a lot and the residual minority who own virtually nothing'. Rather than signifying a decrease in class distinction this

change is fragmenting the class system with 'new lines of cleavage' based on status (Saunders 1990b: 86) and lifestyle (Chaney 1996; Harloe et al 1992). As Chaney (1996: 17) notes, mass marketing and mass advertising have influenced the 'willingness (of) ordinary people to invest resources in the pursuit of style' (Chaney 1996: 17). Thus, lifestyles have emerged as new forms of social identity based on 'cultural affiliations that cut across and (make) more elaborate the class structure of urban industrial society' (Chaney 1996: 10).

Chaney (1996) argues that one aspect of the increasing significance of lifestyles derives from a re-evaluation of material culture away from the monetary value of objects alone in favour of their social and cultural value. 'Lifestyle is a patterned way of using or understanding or appreciating the artefacts of material culture in order to negotiate the play of criteria of status in anonymous social contexts' (Chaney 1996: 43). In other words, lifestyles provide a way of investing everyday life with social or symbolic meaning or value, and a way of playing with identity. Lifestyles therefore depict inclusion and differentiation in terms of the individual and collective means by which people identify themselves as similar to or different from others (Chaney 1996).

Chaney (1996) also argues, however, that lifestyles are invested in the structures and practices of communities within which the use of commodities is taken to be a display of membership. As Cross (1997: 110) points out, 'the social acts of status seeking and 'belonging' inevitably (become) entwined with home display and the aspiration for consumer goods'. The suburbs are central to consumerism because they are sites of the public display of private consumption, and nowhere is this more apparent than in property ownership. In suburbia, property is the embodiment of the ideology of domesticity based on the restrained gentility and gendered space of the private home (Chambers 1997; Chaney 1996). Thus, as Risebero (1996) points out, property becomes more than simply a question of use

and exchange value. It is also a means by which ideological messages about society and its class structure are transmitted. It becomes a commodity with cultural significance, a form of social status which reflects both cultural distinction and personal identity (Hamnett 1995).

Equal to the cultural and symbolic aspects of property ownership in perpetrating social difference and inequality are economic factors relating to the property market, especially under the increasing influence of globalisation (Fainstein and Harloe 1992; Harloe et al 1992). Harloe et al describe a process whereby the de-regulation of home mortgage finance and integration with global money and capital markets has attracted new players into the highly profitable sphere of property. A concentration of the interests of multinational financial and other corporations establishes a demand for luxury housing in certain areas, and the resulting high price of land and intense competition for house-buying sets a precedent in the market which creates what Beauregard (1986) calls a gentrification effect. This 'heating up' of the housing market fuels a house-price boom that affects all levels of the market (Beauregard 1986: 45).

Property booms may, of course, adversely affect home-owners at all levels of society because they can result in the increase of mortgage arrears and defaults (Harloe et al 1992). However, housing policies have generally favoured home-owners, especially the middle classes in larger properties, in the form of tax incentives (Harloe et al 1992; Kingdom 1992) and government and local planning policies which have tended to encourage suburban development (Harloe et al 1992). Political policies direct financial resources at the private housing market and at the same time starve public investment in the services which benefit the poor, such as social housing provision (Logan et al 1992).

As Harloe et al (1992) point out, lower-income subsidies tend to be more selective and rigorous in their application. Also policies such as the council tenants' right to buy their council houses mean that these houses are forever lost from the stock of social housing to the types of people who need them. These policies, Harloe et al argue, not only concentrate a housing crisis among the poor, but also re-stratify the urban population in terms of access to housing based on finance and location, rather than class alone. Harloe et al suggest that it is often areas which have suffered industrial disinvestment, or were once traditional working-class neighbourhoods, which become the focus of new investment. New development offers little benefit to the indigenous communities it impacts upon, since existing uses are demolished to make way for luxury housing targetted at upper-income groups, many of whom will have made their money from the expansion of global interests. Instead, these new housing developments, usually in the form of exclusive and exclusionary 'middle-class enclaves' which create their own private realms protected by private security, sit incongruously with the old (Harloe et al 1992: 190).

London's Docklands is a prime example of many of the effects Harloe et al describe. Foster (1999: 1) carried out a study on the Isle of Dogs in Docklands to examine the impact of major economic restructuring and social change in the 1980s from 'the different and competing perspectives of all those actors involved, both powerless and powerful'. She notes how, throughout the history of the area, there had been 'a remarkable continuity in the area's failures and fortunes over time' whereby investors sought profits through various kinds of development, while the social processes which impacted on the indigenous communities remained the same (Foster 1999: 7). Local people had to contend not only with government institutions and developers, but also the influx of affluent 'yuppie' incomers, all of whom had their own vision of what Docklands should be and what it had to offer (Foster 1999: 159).

With affluent housing an integral part of the redevelopment plan, the area took on an entirely different image 'that had little to do with embracing its East End roots or aspects of traditional working class life' (Foster 1999: 159). As one islander said of the newcomers 'it's just another place to them. It's got no links with the past' (Foster 1999: 310). Some of the home-owning members of the indigenous population benefited from the commercial success of the development by the increase in value of their homes. However, as a result of housing policies, tenants were faced with increased competition for the dwindling stock of council housing by an influx of homeless Bengali families, leading to social divide and racist conflict among the most powerless groups (see also Foster 1996). But, as Foster states, 'it was not simply the divisions within and between the poorer sections of the island that gave cause for concern....it was that "vast wealth" was...."sitting cheek by jowl with (the) relatively poor", a potentially problematic cocktail' (Foster 1999: 311).

Thus, as Smith and Williams (1986: 34) argue; 'the investment of capital is the first weapon of struggle in the ruling-class arsenal'. The property market becomes central to social fragmentation and residential segregation by redifferentiating urban geography since unequal investment of capital concentrates 'disinvestment and devaluation in discrete geographical pockets where deterioration intensifies' (Harloe et al 1992: 192). And as Pitts and Hope (1998) point out, the victims of capital disinvestment are excluded from mainstream social life leading to cultural disinvestment which undermines, or reshapes, the social capital of these disadvantaged communities. In a 'culture of poverty', social isolation deprives 'inner city ghetto residents of the kind of cultural learning from mainstream social networks that facilitate social and economic advancement in modern industrial society' (Wilson, quoted in Lash and Urry 1994: 148). 'Recapitalization' in other directions often results in a diminution of local social controls and, more often than not, crime (Pitts and

Hope 1998: 41). The poor are forced to suffer materially and emotionally, while at the same time the wealthy live 'in perpetual fear of revolt by the have-nots' (Kingdom 1992: 70).

'Anxieties of affluence'

So far I have described dramatic social, economic, political and technological change characterised by an increasingly global culture. While in some respects globalisation has universal impact, such as the globalisation of risk (Beck 1992; Furedi 1997; Giddens 1991a), in other respects it has hugely differential effects, providing opportunities for certain affluent sectors of society and constraints on the poor (see for instance Fainstein and Harloe 1992; Massey 1994; Young 1999). However, globalisation and social change also bring anxiety, partly from their de-stabilising effects on an individual's inner security and identity (Giddens 1991a). They also bring anxiety through the development of what Beck (1992) refers to as a 'risk society', the consequences of which impact on 'individuals, groups, areas and nations' (Foster 1999: 314). The combination of these processes has the profound effect of placing individuals in a 'world of uncertainty' (Foster 1999: 314).

However, I argue that anxieties also arise as a result of social and economic transformations which reinforce social divisions and increasingly polarise the affluent and poor (Logan et al 1992; Young 1999). As I have described, both ends of the social spectrum can be seen to reside in uncomfortable juxtaposition in urban areas (Fainstein and Harloe 1992; Harloe et al 1992). Alternatively the affluent 'contemplate other venues (such as affluent enclaves on the periphery of cities - see Girling et al 2000) in which to pursue and display success' (Harloe and Fainstein 1992: 265). As Donnison (1998) notes, income polarisation generates fear of crime and otherness because it increases crime and victimisation among the impoverished (Smith 1999), and establishes

protectionist desires and defensive strategies among the wealthy (Harloe et al 1992), which in turn reinforce the social divisions. These are what Girling et al (2000: 97) refer to as ‘anxieties of affluence’ and nowhere is this process more apparent than in the suburbs (Silverstone 1997).

‘Internal dangers, external threats’

According to Giddens (1991a: 43), ‘anxiety is a ‘generalised state of the emotions of the individual’ which relates to the overall security system developed by the individual. By contrast, fear is a response to situationally specific phenomena associated with particular risks or dangers. Anxiety expresses ‘internal dangers’ rather than ‘external threats’, but ‘because anxiety is diffuse, it is free-floating: lacking a specific object, it can become pinned to items, traits or situations which have an oblique (although unconsciously precise) reaction to whatever originally provoked it’ (Giddens 1991a: 44). Giddens argues that anxiety and uncertainty arise from two sources: the transference of trust from locales to expert knowledge and abstract systems; and the globalisation of risk, through what Beck (1992: 36) calls the ‘universalization of hazards’.

Uncertainty challenges ‘questions of time, space, continuity and identity’ (Giddens 1991a: 37). Giddens (1991a: 38) argues that trust in others is established in early infancy and is connected to the interpersonal organisation of time and space, the ‘potential space’ which relates and yet distances infant from caretakers. Habits and routines play a fundamental role in the forging of relations in potential space between infant and caretakers since, as Giddens (1991a: 39) suggests, ‘core connections are established between routine, the reproduction of coordinating conventions, and feelings of ontological security in the later activities of the individual’. The trust vested in caretakers and routines in the early stages of life are what Giddens (1991a: 39 - italics in original) calls an ‘*emotional inoculation* against existential anxieties - a protection against future

threats and dangers’, or a ‘*protective cocoon* which all normal individuals carry around them as a means whereby they are able to get on with the affairs of day-to-day life’ (Giddens 1991a: 40 - italics in original).

According to Giddens (1991a), in traditional societies trust is embedded in the locale through kinship relations, local communities or religious commitment. As traditions, habits and customs become eroded through the effects of globalisation on cultures, rather than being replaced by the ‘certitude of rational knowledge’, in their place lies doubt which permeates everyday life and ‘forms an existential dimension of the contemporary social world’ (Giddens 1991a: 2-3). To reinstate an inner sense of security trust is placed in abstract systems, such as scientific and technical knowledge (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991a). Abstract systems are ‘disembedding mechanisms’ which involve the ‘lifting out’ of social relations from local contexts and their rearticulation across indefinite tracts of time-space (Giddens 1991a: 18), thus encouraging individual responses to risk and dissipating trust in the local community.

Undoubtedly, the globalising influence on place-bound trust which Giddens describes is evident in many circumstances, as my discussion of crime control in chapter 6 confirms. However, Giddens over-generalises these effects. As Lash and Urry (1994) point out, globalisation is uneven and does not influence all places; globalising processes also promote an increased sensitivity to locale. In their study of Manchester and Sheffield, Taylor et al (1996) observed the persistence of local cultural differences in the context of globalisation and change. They noted how a sense of ‘the local’ was retained by a renegotiation and reconstruction of inherited themes of urban folklore within particular localities in both cities (Taylor et al 1996: 29). Massey (1994) argues that these processes are not new but have gone on historically for centuries. My discussion in chapter 3 illustrates the precariousness of generalising changes in trust relative

to 'place'. While reliance on security systems prevailed in Uppenhall (see chapter 6), partly as a result of individualised lifestyles, there remained a pervading sense of trust in those who were perceived as 'belonging' in the locality, irrespective of their anonymity.

Lash and Urry (1994: 245) claim that trust-based anxieties arise from the erosion of the future by 'instantaneous time'; from the immediacy of response demanded by communications technology, such as telephones, facsimiles and computers. Time is also individualised and fragmented by other aspects of late modern life, such as flexitime working and television video recording. Lash and Urry argue that these processes make the future uncertain, and also reduce the extent to which people are prepared to defer gratification. Thus, the social world has become based on the short term: disposable relationships evidenced by the high divorce rate; disposable products and images; and a decline in long-term careers in favour of short-term contracts (Lash and Urry 1994). Uncertainty of the future is also coupled with a preoccupation with the past, a search for a 'golden age' (Lash and Urry 1994: 247; Pearson 1983: 7) which protects from change.

The appeal of the past also reflects the proliferation of incalculable risks associated with the future (Lash and Urry 1994). Risk, according to Beck (1992: 21) may be defined as 'a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization'. Hazards are an unintended consequence of technological development and new forms of production and distribution which have become central to social organisation in the global economy of late modernity (Beck 1992). Unlike the hazards of pre-industrial and early industrial societies, which were limited to certain localities or groups, the hazards of late modernity span national borders, and 'are revealed as irreversible threats to the life of plants, animals and human beings' (Beck 1992: 13). Risk,

together with a preoccupation with safety, has become integral to every sphere of daily activity (Furedi 1997).

The contemporary media play a part in creating anxieties about global risks through the way in which news is packaged and disseminated (Lash and Urry 1994). As Giddens (1991a: 27) notes, through media reporting there is an 'intrusion of distant events into everyday consciousness', often of a tragic nature. The media focus on these sorts of events suggests that the world is full of risks (Lash and Urry 1994). Events become more important than location and are juxtaposed without regard to any commonality other than their 'newsworthiness' (Giddens 1991a: 26; Lash and Urry 1994: 244). News stories are presented in a 'temporally and spatially confused collage', chaotic and arbitrary, and absent of context and narrative (Lash and Urry 1994: 244). Recipients of media news coverage are 'transported' from one event to another in a way which suggests that the world is out of control (Lash and Urry 1994: 244).

However, as Giddens (1991a) notes, risk in late modern societies is not entirely about danger because although technology has created certain risks it has eliminated many others. Technological advancement is translated into risk in the form of fears for the future, especially when accompanied by the disempowering effects of change (Furedi 1997; Giddens 1991a). These effects were evident in the way one elderly participant in my research felt left behind by advances in computer technology. 'This Internet business and so on' Muriel said 'is a closed book to me.....things are going too fast for us over seventies...we just can't cope with it at all'. For some older people like Muriel technological development and change could be exclusionary processes which not only divorce them from progress, but also from younger generations more resilient to change.

Individualism and social fragmentation mean that 'social crises appear as individual crises' (Beck 1992: 100). Social problems, such as crime, are borne by individuals increasingly in the form of anxieties and neuroses (Beck 1992), as my discussion of fear of crime in chapter 5 illustrates. Young (1999: 197) notes that there is a desperate need for identity and 'a pervasive desire to blame', and both are served by the establishment of 'an other from which to distinguish oneself, to assign guilt to and on to which to project negativities'. (Issues of identity and otherness will be discussed further in chapter 3).

Social norms, both at a societal and a very localised level, require consensus but when they are challenged people become unsure about the outcome of social interactions and this can lead to disenchantment with humanity (Furedi 1997). Cyril, an elderly man in my study, expressed these feelings as a result of what he saw as a breach of the trust he had placed in others. 'I've had that many disappointments with various people' he said,

over the years, the more you're kind to them the more they let you down. You could make friends with people...everything goes their way, you help them and do this and do that, the first little thing...happens...(they) stab you in the back. Before I retired I had a decent position....I wasn't a tyrant to work for....I used to believe in.....(being) very good with them as long as they were ok with me but the people you used to give the most to were the ones behind your back, they were trying to undermine you. I've had it happen to me dozens of times, people that I've known for years....oh yes, and....I'm very wary of them.

Individualisation and social fragmentation, especially when enhanced by a sense of insecurity, can give rise to feelings of isolation and vulnerability and a fear of strangers (Furedi 1997) and I develop this point in chapter 5.

Economic insecurities

Economic change has brought prosperity but it has also brought hardship. As with risk, the economic world is in many ways just as uncertain and the affluent are not totally insulated from the disempowering effects of economic change.

The working class have suffered from the decline of heavy industry, such as manufacturing, shipbuilding and coal extraction (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a). But, in free market economics where labour is expendable, the percentage of the population in secure employment becomes an ever-shrinking minority, and even 'the middle classes, once contented, have found their world rendered precarious and transient' (Young 1999: 8). The 'absolute certainties of biography and aspiration' have been replaced by 'a world which is more chaotic; its structure begins to unravel, its constituents fragment and the everyday world of its members seems problematic, blurred and uncertain' (Young 1999: 8).

This uncertainty filters down and influences insecurities at the level of the individual by emphasising the fluidity and impermanence of 'community' (Bauman 2000). For instance, as Doug, a middle-aged, married man who participated in my research, pointed out, redundancy and divorce increase the transiency of the population where residence is dependent on high incomes, usually from both partners working. 'Nobody'd sold up other than people that've got divorced which always means you've gotta sell your place' he said. 'The (neighbour) on the front, he was gutted 'cos he knew once (his wife) moved out he'd got to sell....he didn't want to sell, he said "I'd love to stay here" 'cos he enjoyed it but he knew he had to go'. In settled communities like Coniston Close, a cul-de-sac in my study where the residents felt that the balance of personalities added to the social success of the community, situations such as sudden economic hardship which forced people to sell up and move out could have a destabilising effect. 'Everybody's quite happy staying...people are settled' Doug, who lived in the close, argued. 'We'll stay here until such times as it all starts to go sour, which it could do....(if) you get six or seven people move for various reasons and...those people coming in don't want to mix or...just don't gel'.

Economic restructuring affects the insecurities of the affluent in significant ways. The downsizing of manufacturing industry creates relative deprivation throughout the class structure (Young 1999) but, in some areas, particularly on the housing estates which supplied workers for industry, it has generated a 'permanent pool of unemployed' (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a: 12). These are the threatening young, unskilled males (Campbell 1993) who are 'barred from the racetrack of the meritocratic society yet remain glued to the television sets and media which alluringly portray the glittering prizes of a wealthy society' (Young 1999: 12). As Smith (1999: 128) points out, 'these young people want the conventional goods of a modern developed economy, and are painfully conscious of how their own histories and their current experiences of exclusion and deprivation act as barriers to their achievement'.

One potential outcome of this situation is the illegitimate pursuit of material goods (Farrar 1997) manifest as 'higher theft rates which, at worst, could result in organised predation of the rest of the city and the highways' (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b: 22). This process was evident to some extent in the town of my study. In one estate with high levels of council ownership, nearly fifteen per cent of men were unemployed, four times the number in the suburb in which I conducted the research and almost double the unemployment level in the town generally (County census 1991). At the same time the council estate had one of the highest crime rates in the town.

Although crime occurs disproportionately in deprived areas, fear of crime has become one of the main 'anxieties of affluence' (Girling et al 2000: 97). As Girling et al (2000: 97) suggest in their analysis of Prestbury, an affluent enclave on the outskirts of Macclesfield, people's worries 'are powerfully mediated by what they have invested - materially and emotionally - in the distinctive, 'haven'-like qualities of 'their village''. Travelling crime, pedlars who are seen

as suspicious intruders, and boisterous teenage activities which are associated with drug use, all impinge unfavourably on the exclusive image the place projects. As Girling et al explain, residents are keen to maintain order and security, not only as a protection from a hostile and uncertain world outside, conditions which many of them contribute to in the process of gaining the means to be able to retreat to their haven, but also to protect their investment:

Pivotal to the cultural value of this 'English Village' is that it is seen to offer a shelter of tranquillity, order and stability which contrasts starkly with the violence, disorder and insecurity of the city [and the wider 'risk profiles' of late modernity]. No matter that Prestbury is thoroughly permeated by larger 'social systems and organizations'.... nor that many of its inhabitants are powerful players in the globalizing, risk-generating corporate world of late modernity. To buy into Prestbury is to purchase a pleasurable, exclusive retreat, a place of rest and recreation, a 'safe-haven' for oneself, one's family and one's children, an environment bracketed off from the troubles of the outside world. This is something that many of its residents have taken on hefty - often anxiety-inducing, success-dependent - financial commitments in order to enjoy. Hence the intensely felt feelings of disquiet, disappointment and anger that attach to locally occurring instances of crime and disorder; a reaction not only to the objective harm that these problems cause, but also to the apparent withering of the order and security in which people have invested so much economic and emotional capital.

(Girling et al 2000: 115)

The attitudes and values of these Prestbury inhabitants reflect wider protectionist desires which have been identified with suburban populations trying to distance themselves not only from the material effects of crime, but also the economic impact it can have on the image, and wealth-creating ability of an area (Taylor 1996). For example, Taylor (1996) suggests that in a changing commercial world, where capital and personal investment in an area is dependent on the status and reputation of that area, crime and disorder are a threat to investment decisions. Since economic activity has become a matter of 'corporate choice' rather than 'geographical necessity..... economic forecasters now predict that the particular local area where one lives will increasingly be of greater consequence, in economic terms, than living in a particular region of the country' (Bottoms and

Wiles 1996a: 15). This reinforces the 'clear, broad geographies of power' (Massey 1994: 160) in which local crime rates affect, on the one hand, the job security of residents who rely on local investment in order to maintain their position, and on the other, the status of the area since poor investment leads to decline and decline is further linked to crime (Taylor 1996).

'Doomsday scenario'

Concurrent with the social, economic and technological transformations I have described are changes in policing. The local needs of communities are being balanced with demands on policing created by globalisation (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; 1996b). Consequently the public police are moving away from the local patrol function so favoured by the public (Loader 1999) and in affluent areas they are steadily being replaced by private security companies in a process of commercialisation of policing services (Bayley and Shearing 1996). As a result the 'responsibility for the guardianship of urban space is rendered ever more diffuse and fragmented (Girling et al 2000: 166).

One possible outcome is a system of 'two-tier policing which couples private residential patrols for some with 'zero tolerance' crackdowns on others' (Girling et al 2000: 176). If current trends continue unabated Bottoms and Wiles (1996b: 27) forecast the potential for a 'doomsday scenario' of a return to the mediaeval notion of public and private realms where security for the privileged is offered in a series of privatised 'defended locales, linked by protected routes and surrounded by 'badlands' occupied by dangerous 'others'.

Both scenarios remain a possibility in a world of declining civil society in favour of privatised responsibility (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b; France and Wiles 1998; Reiner and Cross 1991) where the boundaries between public and private are being redrawn (Johnston 1991). It is a world where space is being reconfigured

as a series of private realms controlled by 'private governments' which are displacing the power of local government (Shearing 1996: 86). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the shopping mall, which epitomises the commercial aspect of privatised, aestheticised space made conducive for material consumption (Reeve 1996), where management policies exercise a form of social control by excluding undesirables, often youths, who may taint or threaten the manufactured ambience of the space (France and Wiles 1998; Reeve 1996; Valentine et al 1998).

These developments are not confined to the commercial sector. The kinds of private and secure residential complexes which I referred to earlier are being built as 'gated communities', exclusively for the wealthy in many towns and cities, both within urban conurbations (Davis 1990; Shearing 1996), and also on the urban fringe and beyond for the suburban elite (Girling et al 2000). Indeed, the modern gated city is not far away from realisation: 'an updated, high-tech version of the mediaeval town sheltering behind its thick walls, turrets, moats and drawbridges, a town fenced off securely from the world's risks and dangers' (Bauman 2000: 91). Bauman describes plans for a new city, to be called Heritage Park, near Cape Town in South Africa. The city will 'stand out from other towns for its self-enclosure: high-voltage electric fencing, the electronic surveillance of access roads, barriers all along the way and heavily armed guards' (Bauman 2000: 91). In all of these cases 'new forms of solidarity, subjectivity and identification' based on the commodification of security can be found (Loader 1999: 383), where '*the commonality of anxiety* takes the place of *the commonality of need*' (Beck 1992: 49, italics in original).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described a world of change, which impacts at all levels of society from the individual to nation-states. It is a world in which most people

are driven by a desire to change, for lack of change implies stagnation (Wilson 1997), but they are also held back by the fear of change (Osborne 1996). Change brings opportunity, wealth and power. For example, the high rewards gained by multi-national corporations in areas such as the property market (Harloe et al 1992) have been made possible by de-regulation and new forms of governance in international finance (Hirst and Thompson 1996). However, change can also bring disadvantage, disempowerment, deprivation and marginalisation for some sectors of society in terms of gender, ethnicity, social class (Anthias 1999) and location (O'Brien and Jones 1996).

Another dimension of social change relates to insecurity which is experienced by the powerful as well as the powerless. Insecurity stems on the one hand from the nature and pace of change, where the turmoil of the outside world is mirrored internally (Frosh 1991). This insecurity can be both exciting and threatening, offering the option of learning to live with uncertainty and remaining open to new experiences, or becoming defensive against change in order to create a sense of security (Frosh 1991). On the other hand, insecurity stems from the juxtaposition of inequality that social change reinforces: inequality seen in the continuity of exclusive and excluding social practices embodied in many aspects of suburban life, and in the continuity of poverty in the context of the stakeholder society of contemporary politics where 'those without stakes or sufficient stakes in a world where stakes are everything will not simply go away' (Jones 1998: 170). In chapters 3 to 6 the issues raised here relating to exclusive identity and fear of difference, and how they impact on fear of crime and informal social control, will be explored in the context of my own research.

Chapter 2

Telling it like it is?
Methods and methodology.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on two themes: my rationale for the use of ethnography to carry out the research, and my account of the research process. Ethnography is one of the principal qualitative research methods in the social sciences (Brewer 2000). Brewer (2000: 10) defines ethnography as ‘the study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities’. The process involves the immersion of the researcher in the day-to-day lives of the people, studying the meanings of their behaviour, language and interactions through prolonged, and often participatory, observation (Creswell 1998).

Ethnography, however, is not limited to the process of data collection; it also encompasses the way ‘information or data are transformed into a written or visual form’ (Tedlock 2000: 455). The qualitative nature of ethnography implies an emphasis on qualities, processes and meanings which cannot be examined experimentally, or measured in terms of quantities (Denzin and Lincoln 2000a). Moreover, as a qualitative method ethnography stresses how social experience is constructed and given meaning and emphasises the value-laden nature of enquiry (Denzin and Lincoln 2000a).

Ethnography has been critiqued by natural scientists and postmodernists, but some of its greatest critics have been ethnographers themselves (Brewer 2000). Some critiques centre on validity and reliability, and the extent to which ethnography can accurately represent ‘reality’, while others focus on researcher objectivity (Brewer 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). More recent claims about the diminishing importance of localities as a result of globalisation have brought new challenges to the legitimacy of a research method that is context dependent (Brewer 2000). I outline some of the critiques of ethnography but argue that in-depth investigative procedures and detailed

description remain the most appropriate means of representing a cultural group (Creswell 1998) and accessing the 'tacit knowledge' of its members (Altheide and Johnson 1998: 297). As Hanrahan et al (1999: 401) rightly argue: 'The traditional scientific model (of enquiry) seems...to give an over-simplified picture of how learning happens and what knowledge is, since it presents learning as a more or less linear, impersonal and individualistic process resulting in knowledge which may be detached from the personal, cultural, and historical context of the researcher'.

Furthermore, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 16) note, contrary to the positivistic view that research can be objective and value-free, 'researchers are part of the social world they study'. In addition, social scientific research often arises out of some contingency in the personal biography of the researcher (Taylor et al 1996). Any suggestion that research can be neutral or hygienic, or indeed the research setting uncontaminated by the researcher, is futile (Coffey 1999). Since research is itself a social activity, it is 'powerfully affected by the researcher's own motivation and values' (Blaxter et al 1996: 15). Therefore researchers need to be reflexive and openly situate their own values, beliefs and motives in the research (Hammersley 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). I acknowledge my own value-laden agenda for conducting the research in my account of the research process.

Openness and transparency should extend throughout the research process, from early intentions and methodological considerations to the conduct of the research, its analysis and findings (Blaxter et al 1996). The sanitised, linear progression of research depicted in the traditional scientific model (Hanrahan et al 1999) belies the often messy, difficult and problematic nature of conducting ethnographic research (Bennett de Marrais 1998) which in itself may be informative about the research setting or participants (Arber 1993; Hammersley

and Atkinson 1995; Pearson 1993). In my introduction to the research setting and account of the fieldwork I highlight the ethical and practical difficulties encountered and how these were dealt with. Finally I discuss my use of the NUD*IST qualitative data software for data handling, storage and analysis. Since there is a growing body of literature which gives good account of the variety of programs available and the extent of their capabilities (see for instance Brewer 2000; Durkin 1997; Fielding 1993b; Richards and Richards 1998; Weitzman 2000 [see also Richards and Richards 1994 for a discussion on the development of NUD*IST]), I describe my own experience of using NUD*IST and its influence on the analytical process.

The dilemmas of ethnography

Ethnography refers to the social scientific study of cultures through description and interpretation (Creswell 1998; Vidich and Lyman 2000). The word ethnography originates from *ethnos*, the Greek term for a people, race or cultural group, and *graphic* meaning description (Vidich and Lyman 2000). However, culture, like community (see chapter 3), is a nebulous concept (Creswell 1998). Chambers (2000: 852) defines culture as: 'composed of those understandings and ways of understanding that are judged to be characteristic of a discernible group'. Thus culture is assigned to a group by the researcher in the process of exploring cultural themes inherent in patterns of daily life (Creswell 1998).

Hence the subjective role of the researcher is critical both in defining the culture, and in terms of interacting with and interpreting the meanings of those depicted in the cultural portrait; processes which will be influenced by the researcher's own ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as the values that she or he brings to the research process (Creswell 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2000a). However, concern about the objectivity of the researcher and

validity of data has led to an embittered debate amongst ethnographers regarding the continuing relevance of ethnography as a social research method (Altheide and Johnson 1998; Brewer 2000).

A ‘knowable world’?

Objectivity formed the epistemological underpinning of early types of ethnography based on naturalism, and some forms of positivist ethnography (Brewer 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). This was based on a belief that the knowable world could be discovered if studied ‘in its ‘natural’ state, undisturbed by the researcher’ in ways that are sensitive to the nature of the setting (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 6). Yet, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out, naturalism is rooted in the subjectivity of relativism and constructivism. The naturalistic ethnography of early cultural anthropology portrayed the social world as constructed by people both through their interpretations of it and actions based on those interpretations (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

Positivist ethnography arose from the influence of the natural science model of social research (Brewer 2000). The natural science model assumes that the social world is ‘an external knowable entity, existing ‘out there’ independent of what people believe or perceive it to be’ (Brewer 2000: 31). Objective and generalisable knowledge about causal relationships between phenomena can be attained by rigorous testing, provided every attempt is made to eliminate the effects of the researcher by standardised research procedures (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Thus the research process under positivism endeavours to be value free (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). The critique of humanistic ethnography by those who took a scientific view of social research has led some ethnographers to refine and improve their procedural rules. A rigorous methodological approach made these ethnographers ‘like scientists in the

accuracy with which they wanted to capture reality, and like scientists they believed in a fixed reality, which rigorous method could uncover, describe and explain' (Brewer 2000: 21).

Competing realities

Since the 1960s positivism has come under attack and there has been an anti-realist critique of ethnography (Brewer 2000). As Brewer (2000: 38-9) notes, postmodernists have challenged the assumption that an objective reality exists and that it is possible to represent it accurately in the ethnographic text through 'thick' description, which provides a thorough account of phenomena, context and the meanings assigned to them. Postmodernists argue that the impartial 'privileged' status of the ethnographer as an insider providing an objective view of the social world is false; the ethnographer's account is as partial as the accounts of participants (Brewer 2000: 42). Thus, 'thick' description cannot represent 'reality' because 'such descriptions are selective from the various competing versions of reality that could have been produced' (Brewer 2000: 42).

These critiques have resulted in a recognition that ethnographic accounts cannot represent reality in an unproblematic way (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). There is an acknowledgement that the researcher has an influence on the research process, through his or her own attitudes, values and beliefs, which need to be reflexively aired and discussed (Hammersley 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). The political and ideological influences on research have also been acknowledged (Blaxter et al 1996; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 15) point out, 'ethnography, like other forms of social research, cannot but be concerned simultaneously with factual and value matters, and its role inevitably involves political intervention (whether researchers are aware of this or not)'.

Holy trinity

Despite recognition of the problems in representing reality, concerns about validity, reliability and generalisability remain (Brewer 2000; Janesick 2000). Undoubtedly these concerns are remnants of the positivist era which continue to haunt researchers; harking back to a search for one 'truth' and universality (Scheurich 1997). However, validity, reliability and generalisability become problematic concepts if it is assumed that there is no single truth, or no single reality which can be captured. Qualitative research which argues from this standpoint needs alternative criteria for evaluation, and certainly different criteria than quantitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Janesick 2000).

The postpositivist search for scientific credibility, generalisability, ability to generate theory, and reflexivity of the researcher becomes the constructivist's 'quality criteria' of trustworthiness and authenticity (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 277). The poststructuralist stress on subjectivity, emotionality and feeling is countered by the postmodern doubt of all criteria by which qualitative research is assessed (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Hammersley 1992).

Scheurich (1997), for example, argues that criteria such as trustworthiness are just another expression of validity; on the surface they appear different but underneath they are the same. He states: 'validity...wears different epistemological masks, either that of the conventional approach to the social sciences or that of the more 'radical' postpositivist approach to the social sciences' (Scheurich 1997: 82-83). These masks protect 'ideological power alignments' which create boundaries between acceptability and non-acceptability of research by the academic establishment (Scheurich 1997: 84).

Scheurich (1997: 88) suggests a need to 'reconstruct 'validity' or 'truth' as many sided or multiply perspectival, as shifting and complex'. Generalisation is replaced by contextualisation of knowledge (Kvale 1996). Thus, the 'holy trinity' of validity, reliability and generalisability become reconceptualised as specific local, personal and community forms of truth, with a focus on daily life and local narrative (Kvale 1996: 229). Instead of 'expecting to find the truth', research should be conducted with rigour, professionalism and honesty, and presented with open and transparent intentions, methodology, analysis and findings (Blaxter et al 1996: 16).

A future for ethnography?

The debate about globalisation and the diminishing importance of place in social life has inherent challenges for ethnography (Brewer 2000). As I argued in chapter 1, globalisation impacts at all levels of daily life, but the greatest implications for ethnography lie in its effects on culture and 'place' (Brewer 2000). As Brewer (2000: 173) points out, 'globalisation creates a cultural glob in which there is no space for difference, and thus for ethnography's stress on bounded fields as sites for localized social meanings'. The loss of 'the local' means that identity and tradition are no longer anchored in local social structures, but constructed through global mass media images based on universalistic patterns of consumption in which culture becomes homogenised (Brewer 2000).

Ethnography is 'locally set, since it examines social meanings in a discrete and bounded locale' (Brewer 2000: 175). The diminishing centrality of locality in social action results in ethnography's loss of purpose (Brewer 2000). However, as I argued in chapter 1, globalisation reduces the importance of the locale in some ways but reinforces it in other ways. As my own research indicates (see particularly chapter 3), in the context of late modern lifestyles social

interactions are unconstrained by ‘place’, yet social identity is firmly rooted in locality. Other studies have also shown how localities remain important in the face of globalising change (eg. Foster 1999; Girling et al 2000; Phillipson et al 1999; Taylor et al 1996).

Brewer (2000) shares Lash and Urry’s (1994) view that tradition and locality are not only surviving, but are being reasserted in the process of globalisation, albeit in different forms than earlier periods. Ethnographic origins in anthropology tended to dwell on the local but there has been a more recent drive to situate the local in a wider context rather than view particular groups in isolation (Chambers 2000; Crow 2000). Brewer (2000) suggests that the role for ethnography in light of these trends is to demonstrate how the global is mediated by people’s actions in the local, examine the persistence of tradition, and describe how traditional and global identities interrelate. He states: ‘since global processes are always mediated locally, often being transformed in the process according to the particularities of the locale, a space for ethnography remains along with that for locality’ (Brewer 2000: 186).

A rationale for ethnography

My justification for adopting ethnography as a research method is based on my ontological and epistemological assumptions about the social world. I make no claim that the social world of my research setting represents ‘the way things really are’, but rather the sense I make of it; an ‘historically and culturally effected’ interpretation as opposed to an eternal truth (Crotty 1998: 64). Thus, the outcomes of my research are a plausible way of seeing things, but not the only way of seeing things; they are suggestive rather than conclusive (Crotty 1998). Furthermore, the philosophical underpinnings of research methodologies tend to be portrayed theoretically as discrete and bounded (see for instance Creswell 1998), yet in the messy practice of research they are often

blurred and indistinct (Hanrahan et al 1999). I draw eclectically, for example, on various philosophical sources ranging from interactionism, critical theory, cultural studies and postmodernism in my interpretation and understanding of the ‘culture’ that I studied.

‘Interrogative techniques’

As a study of people in naturally occurring settings ethnography is a means of data collection which seeks to capture their social meanings and ordinary activities (Brewer 2000). It is a method of research which allows the researcher to set participants’ perspectives against their cultural ‘backdrop’ (Crotty 1998: 7). The focus on the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life is one of ethnography’s strengths (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995), since routines and repetitive activities form the recursive nature of social life (Giddens 1984) (see chapter 1). It is in routines that the structured properties of social activities are, through the duality of structure, constantly re-created out of the very resources which constitute them (Giddens 1984).

In structuration theory, Giddens (1984) acknowledges the need to use research techniques which access information relating to the full range of people’s knowledgeability; in other words how actors account for the conditions of their own action and that of others. As Giddens points out, although agents are knowledgeable reflexive human beings and therefore have the capacity to understand their actions, reflexivity is only partly discursive. Knowledgeability is dependent on two levels of consciousness: ‘discursive consciousness’ (Giddens 1984: 290), or what actors are able to say about the conditions of their own action; and practical consciousness, which is what actors know tacitly about the conditions of their own action but are unable to articulate. While structuration theory does not rule out the use of research methods, such as surveys or questionnaires, these research techniques may not access

non-discursive knowledge. Hence there is a need for more interrogative techniques (Giddens 1984). I do not set out to dismiss the value of quantitative research techniques in some circumstances, but as Arksey and Knight (1999) suggest, methods have to be fit for their purpose.

Research on fear of crime illustrates the point. Much of the literature on fear of crime is based on surveys (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). While surveys may be appropriate for measuring how much of something occurs, they cannot determine why it occurs or the meaning which underlies it. In other words survey methods fail to develop an understanding of complex phenomena, such as fear, which are non-quantifiable (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). However, Hollway and Jefferson argue that qualitative methods such as ethnography will also fail to answer questions of meaning if people's accounts are treated as unproblematic. Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 2) suggest that researchers should not assume that their participants are 'telling it like it is', or that participants 'know who they are and what makes them tick'. To do so 'flies in the face of what is known about people's less clear-cut, more confused and contradictory relationship to knowing and telling about themselves' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000: 3).

Hollway and Jefferson's (2000: 11) inference that a research participant's account may not be a faithful reflection of 'reality' assumes that an independent reality exists outside the individual. It is a reality which may only ever be approximated but never fully captured (Guba 1990, in Denzin and Lincoln 2000a). Giddens (1991a) acknowledges the possibility of a shared reality in many instances of social life. He states:

To answer even the simplest of everyday query, or to respond to the most cursory remark, demands the bracketing of a potentially almost infinite range of possibilities open to the individual. What makes a given response 'appropriate' or 'acceptable' necessitates a shared - but

unproven and unprovable - framework of reality. A sense of the shared reality of people and things is simultaneously sturdy and fragile. Its robustness is conveyed by the high level of reliability of the contexts of day-to-day social interaction, as these are produced and reproduced by lay agents.

(Giddens 1991a: 36)

Lincoln and Guba (1985: 84) assert that individuals may agree on a formal definition of 'tangible entities' such as events, persons or objects. However, 'the meanings and wholeness derived from or ascribed to these tangible phenomena in order to make sense of them, organize them, or reorganize a belief system...are *constructed realities*' (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 84 - italics in original). As Crotty (1998: 64) points out, 'different people may well inhabit quite different worlds. Their different worlds constitute for them diverse ways of knowing, distinguishable sets of meanings, separate realities'. Description and narration cannot therefore be seen as a straightforward representation of reality; they are instead a multivocal representation of how something is seen and reacted to from different viewpoints within a social group (Crotty 1998).

A case from my own research illustrates this point. In chapter 4 I describe conflicting accounts of a situation in which noisy youths occupied a play area on summer evenings. The play area was a triangle of grass with a small concrete apron on which was situated some play equipment. In certain ways the play area constituted a shared reality; for example, everyone agreed that grass was grass and that the equipment was for children to play on. However, the play area also constituted multiple realities; not everyone agreed on the definitions of 'children' and 'play'. Some residents felt that the space should be for young children but not older youths. Certain activities, such as ball games, were considered inappropriate by some and communally beneficial by others. The presence of youths was a major, intransigent nuisance to some, but a minor, transient irritation to others. The meanings attached to the play area were constructed by each individual according to a range of factors, including

age, gender, vested interests, and their social, spatial and temporal relationship with the space.

Notwithstanding Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) aim to capture an objective reality, their methodological approach has much to offer. They highlight that the current knowledge about fear of crime is based on demographics; elderly people are more fearful than the young, women more afraid than men, but why these patterns exist is not so clear. Hollway and Jefferson (1997; 2000) argue for an in-depth, interrogative approach that draws out biographical and life history information as a means of understanding individual responses of fear and anxiety about crime. Goodey (1997: 405) also employs a biographical approach to understanding fear because it accommodates lifecourse changes which impact on 'the individual's daily encounters' and 'the fluid meanings assigned (to) these encounters in social history'. However, as my discussions of fears of youths (chapter 4) and of crime (chapter 5) illustrate, biographies need to be contextualised. Ethnographic methods which incorporate in-depth interviewing and participant observation access both personal and community narratives and situate them in a social, spatial and cultural context.

The research process

Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 3) suggest that 'research is only a more formalised and systematic way of knowing about people', and it is necessary to bring some of the subtlety and complexity of everyday knowing into the research process. Complexity requires interpretation and to avoid being unfair, undemocratic or patronising to participants the same process of analysis must be applied to the researcher as well as the researched (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). This reflexive process involves the self-awareness of researchers and enables them to account for the conditions of production of the research, including their own values and bias which inevitably creep in (Ackers 1993;

Brewer 2000; Hammersley 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). I now give an account of the research process, including my motivations for the research and how these have influenced my research.

‘A conflict of values’

As a qualified architect in private practice for some twenty years specialising in housing design, sociological research has brought both insight and challenge. The challenge has arisen from my move into a discipline with concepts, theories and language of which I had little prior knowledge. These I have had to come to terms with, often with difficulty, frustration and considerable uncertainty. At the same time my fears have been mediated by my architectural background and the capacity to think conceptually which has allowed me to bring fresh insight into the criminological debates about space and crime.

My interest in urban issues came from a course in urban design in the early 1990s. While architecture often focuses on individual buildings from broad concept to fine built detail, urban design is more broadly concerned with groups of buildings and the spaces (and places) they create. It was through urban design that I became concerned about defensive urban planning, in research for a Masters degree which examined the role of the police in the design of housing (Steventon 1994). The aim of that research was to explore police influence on design as a result of crime prevention being introduced into the planning process (see Department of the Environment 1994). The ‘marketing’ of the police scheme, ‘Secured by Design’, seemed to be aimed more at developers of affluent suburban housing in areas which arguably needed it least (Steventon 1996).

I identified the promotion of hegemonic social practices (social exclusion) embedded in particular urban (or more appropriately suburban) forms, such as

the enclave, under the rubric of community crime prevention. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 29) argue, research does not necessarily have to arise from an empathy with those to be studied; it may equally arise from 'difference, conflict, and negative feelings'. Some sort of political ideal in research is acceptable provided it does not result in a distortion of the facts to prove a particular point (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). My Masters research, as well as my immersion in urban design education where the cul-de-sac, and indeed the suburb, are seen as 'anti-urban (see for instance Bentley et al 1985; Hayward and McGlynn 1993) undoubtedly conditioned my view of suburbia. These influences have highlighted what is recognised as a 'conflict of values of those who choose to live in the English suburbs and of those who work in the professional and educational milieu of architecture and planning' (Oliver 1981: 9).

However, although these issues have shaped the research in this thesis and the views I took with me to the field, my research was inspired more by the debates about space and crime than social exclusion. In these debates claims about spatial influences on human behaviour seem to be made without any meaningful empirical investigation (Hillier and Leaman 1973; Steventon 1996). More importantly, crime prevention policy is underpinned by theory with little understanding of its social impact (Steventon 1996). Recent debates (Fairs 1998; 1999a; 1999b) have centred on two conflicting views: the police view which argues that culs-de-sac are safest in terms of crime because they restrict access and escape for intruders, and the view based on space syntax which argues for urban permeability (Hillier 1988; Hillier et al 1983; Hillier and Shu 1999).

Hillier and Shu (1999) analysed spatial factors relating to crime victimisation in a number of housing areas in Britain with a variety of social compositions

and spatial configurations. They found that linear, integrated spaces which allowed through movement and good visibility of building entrances were safer from crime. Conversely, visually fragmented spaces with little movement and poor intervisibility were the most vulnerable. However, Hillier and Shu did not consider the social effects of space; in fact they intentionally set out to eliminate from their analysis the social in order to focus on the spatial (Hillier and Shu 1999). While I acknowledge Hillier and Shu's arguments, I doubt whether social and spatial factors can be separated in the way they set out to do. My concern was to research the *interrelationship* of social and spatial factors and their mutual influences.

A small market town

I selected the town where I conducted my research (which I have called Minington) after meeting a senior police officer from the town who was interested in my research. Minington was a small market town situated in the English Midlands with a population of 75,500 at the beginning of the 1990s (County census 1991). The town offered two main benefits: it was close enough to allow regular access for the fieldwork, but also not well known to me so I had no prior knowledge of the research setting which might influence my initial views. Its compact form also allowed me to easily negotiate the different areas when first getting to know the town, especially as I wanted initially to 'get a feel' for both high and low crime areas.

According to local history publications, Minington had a range of industries, including textiles, hatting and hosiery, but its geology had led to the town's growth from the extraction of stone, clay and coal. With improved and efficient mining techniques, brought about by steam power, mining became the predominant industry and the town's main employer, with around fifteen pits in production locally until the decline of the coal industry in the latter half of the

twentieth century. At the height of coal production after the second world war, labour was imported from Wales, the northeast of England and Scotland, to satisfy the demands of the flourishing Midlands mining industry. The expansion of the town at that time reflected a pattern across the country, where pit villages near towns were absorbed into the urban conurbations (Flinn 1963).

The demand for housing after the war led to the building of new estates, such as Lower Bank, located northeast of the town centre (see Figure 1). These estates typified much of the local authority housing stock of that time; hurriedly built with few social and recreational facilities that reflected the social mix of the residents. After the closure of many of the pits in the 1960s and 1970s, some of the miners returned to their place of origin. Others sought employment in the manufacturing industries in Midlands cities and found new wealth. As they prospered, they moved to higher status areas, such as Uppenhall, leaving the council estates to become ghettos for low income families (interview with local vicar).

Uppenhall was situated to the southwest of the town centre, on the 'rural-urban fringe' (Pahl 1965: 74) (see Figure 1). It was a typical affluent, middle class suburb with sixty seven per cent of its residents employed in professional, managerial and technical, and skilled non-manual occupations (County census 1991). Uppenhall originated as an inter-war ribbon development along the Milton Road, comprising large detached houses, some with period details, others half rendered, set in a mature landscape of trees and neatly clipped hedges. The average density of occupation was 13.80 persons per hectare compared to 16.11 persons per hectare for the town as a whole (County census 1991). Apart from a small council estate of terraced houses in the west of the area, Uppenhall's growth from the 1970s onwards comprised private

The research setting: Minington

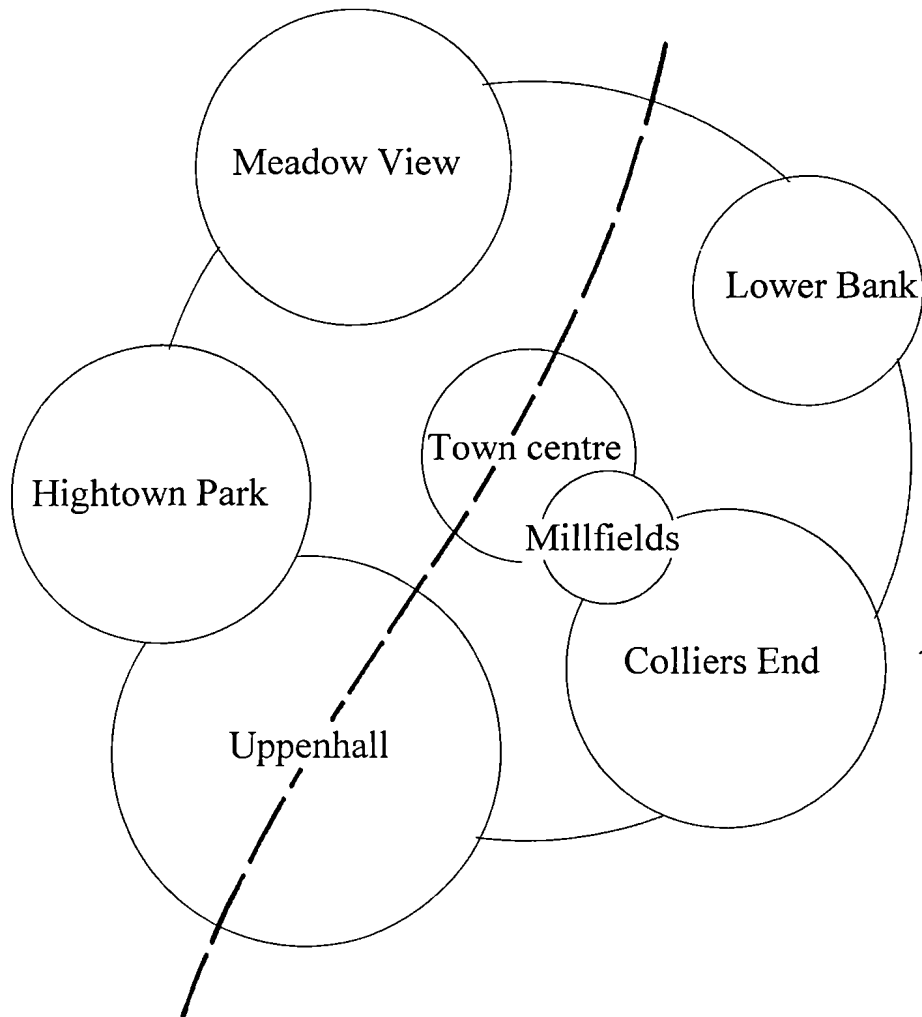


Figure 1

developments; mainly detached housing in culs-de-sac which encroached on the rural hinterland to Milton Road. Thus Uppenhall typified much post-war suburban growth of 'low-density developments which spread out from the cities along communication routes to penetrate deeply, and eventually to obliterate the rural environs' (Oliver 1981: 10).

A different agenda

I was keen to elicit the police's help in identifying and making initial contacts in the research setting. In overt research, access is often gained through explicit negotiations with a 'gatekeeper' (Fielding 1993a). It is a relationship in which the gatekeeper will be interested in what advantages or disadvantages the research may have for them (Fielding 1993a: 159). Such a relationship can have important consequences for the subsequent course of the research; indeed it can 'shape the conduct and development of the research' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 75). For example, the identification of the researcher with the gatekeeper may impact on the researcher's relationship with the researched (Burgess 1982b; Punch 1998).

Although I had not envisaged that the police would act as gatekeeper, I required their co-operation to access crime figures and to accompany the community police officer on her beat to observe police/public relations. Moreover, I saw the police role as facilitating access to the field, rather than controlling it. Being identified with the police may have influenced people's perceptions of my research agenda, but it could also authenticate my presence in the field. The strategy may provide opportunities for access which might otherwise be denied.

The senior police officer's agenda was different. He saw my research as an opportunity for raising the police force's profile locally, particularly among the affluent, by being associated with a study about community crime prevention.

The officer envisaged full media exposure of my research to publicise ways in which the police were investing their energy in the fight against crime. This created obvious dilemmas, not least that the involvement of the media would have situated the research in the public domain and made anonymity impossible.

Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity is one way of protecting participants from potential harm which might arise from the research (Fielding 1993a). Unless participants specifically want their voices to be heard and wish their identity to be known (see for instance Skeggs 1994, in Arksey and Knight 1999: 132), or are in such key public positions that it would be difficult, or indeed undesirable, not to identify them (Chambers 2000; Foster 1999), then anonymity should be ensured. Publicity might have affected some people's willingness to participate and influenced the type of data gained. Despite the possibility of losing some degree of co-operation of the police (which did not materialise), I rejected the public approach and resolved to make my own way into the field.

Curves, cobbles and Lleylandii

My research centred on two areas in Uppenhall (see Figure 2). One was a large development built in stages between the early 1980s and the early 1990s, located between Milton Road and extending up to and beyond Oak Tree Road, a main estate road serving the various culs-de-sac. This area was selected after I met a resident there who agreed to an interview and put me in contact with neighbours, and her parents who lived locally. The second area was a small development of twenty houses built at the beginning of the 1990s in an established part of Uppenhall close to Milton Road. Here an introduction to a couple in the close came through the police. My choice of street names which reflect a rural idyll is deliberate. As Pahl's (1965: 75) study of Hertfordshire

urban fringe development in the 1960s illustrated, the names given to housing estates ‘may be seen as evidence of a yearning for a world that is true to nature’. In chapter 3 I emphasise the role of ‘green and pleasant’ imagery in people’s construction of an identity for the Uppenhall locality. The people that I interviewed and their locations in these areas are set out in Figure 3.

Maple Grove was a long cul-de-sac with smaller branches which ran westwards from Oak Tree Road. Properties were mainly detached houses, apart from a row of small, semi-detached bungalows near the Oak Tree Road junction occupied by elderly people. On the opposite side of Oak Tree Road were two main culs-de-sac, Acacia Drive and Poplar Drive, off which were arranged smaller enclaves. Acacia Drive was a long road of graceful curves, clipped Lleylandii hedges and silver birch trees. Detached houses with upvc windows and mock leaded lights were informally arranged in maturing gardens. On block paved drives sat gleaming new vehicles, often four-by-four off-rovers ironically juxtaposed with small patches of neatly mown lawn; perhaps more a testament to the affluence and status of the occupants than the technological capabilities of the vehicles.

Elm Close and Ash Close were two small enclaves off Acacia Drive, with cobbled rumble strips at their entrances giving an impression of privacy and exclusiveness. Elm Close contained six detached houses set among trees and high hedges. A pedestrian walkway, known locally as ‘the jitty’, was situated between two of the houses, connecting Elm Close to neighbouring Willow Close through a children’s play area. Ash Close was a later phase of the Acacia Drive development (built six years prior to the fieldwork) and had a different character to its surroundings. Twenty two small, compact terraced houses designed as starter or single person units were arranged in three blocks around a central courtyard. Each house had a small frontage with grass and shrub

The Research Setting: Uppenhall

Key

1. Milton Road
2. Oak Tree Road
3. Maple Grove
4. Acacia Drive
5. Elm Close
6. Ash Close
7. Poplar Drive
8. Willow Close
9. Fir Tree Close
10. Coniston Close



Figure 2

People and Places

Location	Residents/age group			
	teens	20s/30s	40s/50s	60+
Maple Grove			Joy	Betty
Elm Close		Jonathan & Sandy	Linda & Paul	Muriel
Ash Close		Neil & Cathy	Lisa Colin Fiona	
Poplar Drive	Sarah Vicky		Martin	Rose & Cyril Simon & Joyce Jenny & Mike
Fir Tree Close				Bob & Mary
Willow Close			Norma	
Coniston Close		David & Karen Sonia Frank	Doug & Liz Pete	

Figure 3

planting and a small garden at the rear. Some had a drive for a car; others shared a communal car park in the corner of the development. The remainder of the courtyard was occupied by a tarmacadamed roadway. With no boundary definition between the properties and the public space, the layout of the houses provided an intimate feel quite distinct from the rest of Acacia Drive. Fifteen of the twenty two houses were occupied by people living alone of which six were men and nine were women, some elderly and widowed. The remainder were occupied by couples. One family rented their property, a situation which caused consternation for some of the residents as I discuss in chapter 3.

Poplar Drive formed part of an older and more formal section of the estate. The houses had been built around fifteen years before the fieldwork. Apart from a single bend along its length Poplar Drive was linear with a mixture of tightly spaced detached houses and bungalows arranged perpendicular to the street. At the top of the cul-de-sac three large bungalows were situated off a shared access, which seemed to separate them from the remainder of the close. Mature planting, high hedges and a sign alongside the access which read 'private' reinforced their exclusiveness. Off Poplar Drive was situated Willow Close, one side of which contained eight small, detached bungalows occupied by 'Rotary widows', as one resident put it (their husbands had all been Rotary club members). On the other side of the close were ten detached houses built as 'design and build' projects by the occupiers. A children's play area was located in Willow Close on a small triangle of land, surrounded on two sides by the rear garden fences of properties in Elm Close, Fir Tree Close and Poplar Drive. I describe the play area and its use as a regular meeting place for youths in some detail in chapter 4.

The second area of my research, which I have called Coniston Close, was a six years old development of twenty detached houses in an established residential

area on the edge of town about half a mile from the Oak Tree Road estate and close to the Uppenhall council estate. Four of the houses were situated outside the cul-de-sac off a private drive overlooking the main road while the remainder were arranged in a 'tee' shaped layout forming the cul-de-sac. The houses in the cul-de-sac were closely spaced with small, open plan frontages giving an intimate atmosphere. The layout, together with the close being bounded on two sides by a school and its playing field and on one side by the railway, seemed to reinforce the insularity of the development from its neighbours.

While I did not set out to carry out comparative research, I did spend some time in Lower Bank, observing, accompanying the community beat police officer, and interviewing people. However, despite the friendliness of people (as indeed they were in Uppenhall) I found gaining access as problematic in Lower Bank as in Uppenhall, as I discuss later. Time restrictions did not permit me to overcome these difficulties and I did not want to restrict my focus on the purpose of my research: the study of a low-crime affluent suburb.

Making contact

Research access is often problematic (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). However, difficulties in gaining access may have positive as well as negative implications for research. While access problems are inconvenient (Pearson 1993), and may create anxieties (Gans 1982), the negotiation of access itself is data (Pearson 1993). The process can for example provide valuable insight into the social organisation of the setting (Arber 1993; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Pearson 1993). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 55) acknowledge, 'much can be learned from the problems involved in making contact with people as well as from how they respond to the researcher's approaches'. The fragmented way in which I gained access reflected not only the prevailing

social conditions of the suburb I studied, but also the drawbacks of my chosen method of gaining entry to the field.

Various means of accessing residents were employed: 'snowballing' (Burgess 1982c; Arber 1993), direct contact during a public meeting to discuss a local issue of youth disorder (see chapter 4), introductions through visits to households with the community beat police officer, and an introductory letter requesting an interview delivered to households in one cul-de-sac. Before the fieldwork commenced I was fortunate to meet a student in a seminar on community crime prevention who lived in Uppenhall. She agreed to be my first interviewee and offered to put me in contact with other people on the estate. I also obtained police consent to accompany the community beat police officer as a participant observer on an eight hour shift (I eventually completed eight shifts during the fieldwork).

Both the resident and the community police officer offered the possibility of accessing residents through a process of 'snowballing', where each contact passes the researcher on to another person or persons (Arber 1993; Burgess 1982c; Foster 1999). The appeal of snowballing for me lay in the fact that it avoided 'cold calling' (I did not favour the 'foot-in-the-door' approach) and gave me some legitimation for each new contact. Since my initial foray into the literature on suburbia had led me to expect mistrust and suspicion, and perhaps even fear, of strangers (see for instance Baumgartner 1988), I was keen to authenticate my presence and intentions as far as possible. However, this strategy was as much to do with my fear of rejection (Gans 1982) as it was to minimise any distress or nervousness in those whom I was researching (Arksey and Knight 1999).

While snowballing is useful for accessing numerically small groups (Arber 1993), its potential for rapid growth of contacts also makes it appropriate for larger populations. If each contact in the field gave rise to two others, an exponential growth of sample could be achieved. However, snowballing depends on a network of contacts and itself reveals interesting data about the researched (Arber 1993). Each participant is in effect a gatekeeper since he or she controls access to the next person. Of the twenty interviews conducted for my research, only seven resulted from residents' contacts, reflecting a disjointed pattern of progress in the field which echoed the fragmented social conditions that I observed. Networks among the people interviewed rarely extended beyond the confines of their cul-de-sac, and often included only their immediate neighbours (see chapter 3). Even when participants agreed to put me in contact with a neighbour or friend, their busy lives (or perhaps lack of motivation) got in the way of their best intentions and my interests were overlooked.

The most important criticism of snowballing is the possibility of bias in the selection of participants, since contacts are made only with those within a connected network of individuals (Arber 1993). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 75) note, the researcher may be 'channelled in line with existing networks of friendship and enmity, territory and equivalent boundaries'. The visits with the community beat police officer provided contacts over a wider geographical spread in the area, but in themselves reflected her networks; they seemed to focus on the more insecure members of the neighbourhood who demanded police time. Contact with members of five households was made at a community meeting set up by the police regarding youth nuisance in the locality, but this attracted only those people sufficiently motivated to attend.

In addition to snowballing I used another means of accessing people. I wrote a letter to all but one household in Coniston Close outlining my research and requesting an interview. I had already interviewed my initial contact in the close and felt their account of the vibrant communal social life merited further investigation. They had agreed to pass me on to other residents but after repeated reminders had failed to do so. Thus, out of growing desperation from my belief that there was some extremely interesting and useful data to be gained if only I could access it, nineteen letters were distributed by hand. Owing to the middle-class status of the people I decided to adopt a professional approach, rather than the role of student which is more likely to 'elicit a considerable measure of sympathy from respondents' (Punch 1998: 165). I introduced myself in the letter as a Chartered Architect conducting research. Foster (1999: 2) used a similar strategy for accessing more powerful groups in her study of London's Docklands by using the status of her 'Doctor' title. Four interviews with five residents resulted from the letter. Three householders declined to participate and despite repeated visits the remainder were never in when I called.

At times the despondency and desperation I felt over the difficulties of gaining access to interviewees was reflected in my approaches to people. For example, on several occasions I arrived for interviews to find the interviewee absent. Neil and Cathy missed our initial appointment through being out arranging an exotic holiday. The vicar of Lower Bank was two hours late from a meeting. Despite the cold weather, I found myself walking the streets, determined not to 'let him off the hook'. Another couple in Lower Bank agreed to be interviewed but did not answer the door when I arrived on the morning of the interview. Their bedroom curtains were closed and I suspected they were still in bed. After 'hammering' on the door to no avail, I left but resolved to telephone later. On calling, the woman chastised me for waking them; she claimed they had

‘been up all night with a sick baby’. Since at our first meeting, her husband had admitted that in his younger days he sorted ‘problems’ by ‘breaking fingers’, I decided to graciously abandon that line of enquiry.

A change of mind

Lisa, my first interviewee in the field, introduced me to a neighbour, Fiona, a divorced woman living alone. The day before the interview Fiona cancelled without reason, informing Lisa that she had decided not to take part. Although disappointed, I was hopeful that by talking through her reasons I might persuade her to change her mind. Arksey and Knight (1999) point out that participation in the research process should be voluntary; coercion should be avoided. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 79) note, negotiating access can be a ‘wide-ranging and subtle process of manoeuvring oneself into a position from which the necessary data can be collected’. Given the difficulties I was experiencing in getting access I decided to contact Fiona and ask why she had cancelled the interview. I did not intend to coerce; merely to discover and understand her reasons as these would themselves provide important data.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that the researcher has little power, but as Hollway and Jefferson (2000) point out, research is often based on unequal power, especially when reflecting structural disparities between social groups (educated, employed, middle class researchers and poor, unemployed participants). Although there were no such disparities between Fiona and myself, she may have felt that the interview would be a disempowering experience for her. She was concerned about the time the interview might take and the intrusiveness of the questions. I offered her control over the amount of time she was willing to give, and the intimacy of detail she was willing to divulge. However, I suspected that her motives for cancelling lay deeper; as a

divorced woman living alone she was perhaps afraid of allowing a male stranger into her home and was fearful of my intentions.

After speaking with her, Fiona agreed to participate and the interview took place one evening in her home. Although Fiona had said nothing to justify my thoughts I was careful to ensure that my demeanour was professional and unthreatening. She made tea while I set up the tape recorder. We talked about gardens (a common interest, it seemed) and she appeared to relax. The interview began. Later, while discussing fear, Fiona's concerns became apparent:

Fiona I'm slightly worried when I'm out with men that I don't know that well to be honest with you.....because you can't always go on looks.....and I am very aware.....but if you think like that you'll never ever go out with a man on your own, would you?...you'd never have a date or anything if you thought like that.

GJS And.....when does your awareness actually become fear....?

Fiona I was nearly raped once...years and years ago but I've never ever forgotten it....I was able to fight my way free...He was a big guy but I fought like hell...and he hadn't got a chance, I just went beserk, because the fighting element in me was unbelievable, I nearly killed him (she laughs)....and I hadn't got any weapons or anything but I just went beserk, I just saw red and went beserk and it makes me wonder if a lot of the rapes, they're either made up afterwards or....they just freeze with fright and they're just unable to do anything.

GJS So was this a chap that you knew or was it a stranger?

Fiona It was someone that I'd just met...but you see when you're young and you're out meeting people and so on this kind of thing happens....(so) I'm always aware. It's awful to say that but I don't really trust anybody....I mean, you look a perfectly nice guy but I couldn't honestly say that I could trust you, I don't trust anybody a hundred per cent.

Fiona trusted me sufficiently to allow me into her home and furthermore disclosed intimate information despite her initial concerns about how much I might probe into her private affairs. Indeed, after the tape recorder was switched off she talked at length about her 'men friends'. Some feminists argue

that men cannot conduct research on, by and for women because men cannot have ‘feminist consciousness’ (Stanley and Wise 1983: 32). However, this argument assumes that gendered realities are different, a point challenged by Goodey’s (1997: 403) notion that gender occurs on ‘a continuum from what is traditionally perceived as feminine or masculine’. Goodey (1997: 402 - italics in original) argues: ‘understanding of ‘maleness’ often assumes the existence of inner distinctive qualities that are *not* feminine, without the articulation of what these qualities are beyond mere outward appearances’. My being male did not prevent Fiona discussing issues of utmost intimacy. After Fiona not wanting to devote much time to the interview I realised I had been there three hours, half of which was spent talking ‘off the record’. I left feeling exhausted, but confident that I had not betrayed her trust.

‘On the margins’

My frustrations at my fragmented progress with the fieldwork was not entirely due to problems of access, but also the limitations on my time in the field. Bell (1999) suggests that many ethnographers negotiate a less than fully participative role in the field. Although I spent some considerable time in the field overall (ten months from June 1997 to March 1998), the part-time nature of my research (necessitated by a part-time PhD), meant I was ‘psychologically on the margins of the social situations and relationships’ studied (Gans 1982: 54), rather than immersed in the culture (Burgess 1982a; Creswell 1998). However, ethnography no longer demands total immersion in a culture in the way of early anthropological studies, as demonstrated by its use in disciplines such as education, health and prisons (Brewer 2000) where total immersion is impractical if not impossible. Conducting the fieldwork part-time may have placed limitations on deeper immersion, but the extended period in the field did allow me to experience the setting at different times of the year, thus

accounting for seasonal variations in social activities. It also gave me critical distance as I was constantly forced to be 'in' and 'out' of the field.

My research was conducted overtly by means of observation, participant observation and in-depth tape recorded interviews; field methods which inevitably raise ethical issues (Burgess 1982a) because 'ethnography is a human practice with human problems' (Richardson 1992: 118). Integrity and honesty are essential to avoid deceiving participants (Creswell 1998). Disclosure of the nature, purpose and consequences of the research should be made to participants and their informed consent sought at the outset (Christians 2000; Fielding 1993a). However, as Punch (1998: 172) argues, 'one need not always be brutally honest, direct and explicit about one's research purpose, but one should not normally engage in disguise'. Moreover, informed consent is unworkable in some sorts of observational research, such as people observed in a public setting (Punch 1998).

Participant observation and interviews access beliefs and meanings, while observations reveal actions (Adler and Adler 1998; Arksey and Knight 1999; Brewer 2000). Participant observation requires the researcher to participate in the scene or interact with informants (Brewer 2000). However, observations are also participatory because the researcher's mere presence in the research setting will have an interactive effect (Burgess 1982a; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Interviews are observational since 'body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the persons being interviewed' are recorded (Angrosino and Mays de Perez 2000: 673).

Little sign of life

I carried out observations in periods ranging from one to four hours at different times of day and encompassing all days of the week. In contrast with Shapland

and Vagg's (1988) experience of 'researcher fatigue' which limited the duration of their observations in busy urban areas, I found difficulties in maintaining concentration and interest during periods in which little happened. It was also hard to associate the lack of activity with useful 'data'. Often the only punctuation in spells of prolonged silence and absence of life were from people leaving their houses, getting into cars and driving off, or returning home and disappearing indoors. During an hour of observations in a small cul-de-sac one evening in September 1997, the only sign of life was a cat which quietly walked across the close and disappeared.

Although observations tend only to capture visible public activities, they are useful for interpreting participants' perceptions discussed in interviews (Shapland and Vagg 1988). For example, an interview that I conducted with one young couple, Neil and Cathy, contained what appeared to be contradictory statements. Neil and Cathy felt that they often monitored activity in their close; 'Cathy will tell you too much for me' Neil said. Yet they also revealed that their busy work and social lives involved considerable periods off the estate. Watching was dependent on other factors too. Their small kitchen faced the front and the sitting room overlooked the rear garden therefore only time spent in the kitchen, or upstairs in the bedroom, would afford watching opportunities. My observations confirmed their lifestyle and the restricted periods in which their watching took place.

Interviews are conversations between two or more people (Denzin and Lincoln 2000b; Kvale 1996). The interactional nature of interviews means that they can never be neutral (Denzin and Lincoln 2000b); instead they lead to negotiated, contextually-based results (Fontana and Frey 2000) influenced by the personal characteristics of the researcher, including race, class, ethnicity and gender (Denzin and Lincoln 2000b). Interviews were semi-structured, using a

technique of 'progressive focusing' (Arksey and Knight 1999: 18). Early questioning was generalised, for example enquiring about the social life of the estate, and moving on to more detailed issues as the interview progressed (Fontana and Frey 2000). Although I was working with some 'a priori categorization', I did not want to 'limit the field of inquiry' (Fontana and Frey 2000: 653). I therefore endeavoured not to constrain the interview process and risk encouraging people to tailor their information to what they assumed I wanted to hear (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). In some cases this freedom produced some rich biographical data.

I conducted twenty in-depth, tape recorded interviews ranging from sixty to ninety minutes duration involving a total of thirty one people. Eleven interviews were conducted jointly of which nine involved married couples. One elderly woman's neighbour had 'popped in for a chat' and her presence gave me the benefit of another viewpoint, although joint interviews can influence disclosures (Arksey 1996; Arksey and Knight 1999). One interview involved two teenage women whom I interviewed together in order to put them at ease and establish rapport and confidence (Arksey and Knight 1999).

Although, as Arksey and Knight (1999) point out, joint interviews may provide fuller accounts since each interviewee fills in the gaps in the other's stories, they may result in the domination of one account over another, or stir up antagonism or conflict. My interview with one elderly couple, Simon and Joyce, followed this pattern. Simon was articulate and forthright, Joyce quiet and reserved. Early in the interview Joyce's input mainly confirmed Simon's point of view. For example, she agreed that the quiet of their location was the main attraction for moving there. However, as the interview progressed and my probing went deeper Joyce began to open up about her fears of being in their bungalow alone and her yearning for more public activity (see chapter 5).

Simon seemed to be unaware of (or chose not to heed) Joyce's feelings. He said to her 'this is quite news to me about liking a lot of people around you'. The joint interview proved invaluable in revealing the dynamics between the couple (Arksey and Knight 1999). It also gave Joyce an opportunity to express her views which might otherwise have remained unspoken (Arksey 1996).

The interview process can raise ethical issues, especially regarding the researcher's sensitivity to the needs of the participant (Arksey and Knight 1999). Interviews sometimes involve listening to more than what the research is about: 'It goes without saying that at the end of the interview you do not make a quick dash for the door, and certainly ought never to leave anyone in a state of distress' (Arksey and Knight 1999: 114). I conducted one interview with an elderly woman who had been widowed two years before the fieldwork. The process turned out to be an emotional and perhaps cathartic experience for her, and stressful for me (Arksey and Knight 1999). Hammersley (1992) mentions the personal 'baggage' that a researcher brings to the research process and its effects on the research, but he neglects what is *not* brought to the process and how this might affect the research. It was a situation for which research training cannot adequately prepare the researcher; one that made me feel particularly out of my depth at the time.

'The Lord can take me'

Betty was a woman in her late seventies who had been widow two years before the fieldwork (see chapter 5 for a discussion of how bereavement influenced Betty's fears). I had been introduced to Betty by the community beat police officer while making a 'social' call during her shift. Betty became overcome with grief on that occasion so it was with some trepidation that I arrived for our interview a few days later. I was unsure how I would react if she became emotional during the interview. Thus, I was relieved to find that Joy, a

neighbour, had ‘popped in for a chat’, although Betty later admitted the reason for Joy’s presence was because of her own fear of being alone with a male stranger in her home (see also chapter 5):

After I’d told you that you could come, I thought what (have I done)...I said to (Joy)....“I’ve no idea who he is....he looked genuine. I mentioned it to (the community police officer) and she said “he’s perfectly alright”. But....as silly as it looks....you could have stabbed me, you could have shot me...quite possibly, couldn’t you?

Joy’s presence would undoubtedly alter the dynamics of the interview (Arksey and Knight 1999) and may influence or inhibit what Betty told me, but since her presence related directly to Betty’s fears, I decided to turn it to advantage and enjoin her in the interview.

Betty frequently reminisced about her late husband but as the interview progressed she became more melancholic and contrasted her happiness when he was alive with her loneliness since his death:

When my husband was alive...he’d go a couple of years and forget all about his cancer and stomach and head and one thing and another...and we’d go off on holiday, we’d be as....as happy as (could be)....but the latter part of his life he depended totally on me and I never gave this..one thought of being without him. I might bore people to tears but I can’t help it, I can’t. If I could come in here and find him I’d be the happiest person out.

Betty became increasingly emotional and eventually her mood turned to despair:

When I go to bed at night I never close my eyes before I....tell the Lord I don’t wanna wake up in the morning.....it takes some understanding really....I know I’m not mental but....there’s something radically wrong somewhere cos I can’t shake it off.....(begins to cry) I don’t care what anybody says....the Lord could take me now....I do not want to wake up in the morning.

Joy’s response was calm and supportive. ‘I’d hoped you’d....got over that...and were feeling a bit more settled’ Joy said, ‘as I’ve said to you (before), I would have missed you so much, if I’d have moved here and didn’t have you to talk

to, you were the first neighbour I got to know here....it's nice to know I can come and chat to you'. Feeling inadequate, I sat and listened. Betty continued:

Now you two this afternoon we've had this chat, you've gotta go and leave me here. When can I come to terms with this silly notion of being on my own?....whether it'll leave me, I don't know. I'm hoping it does....I am absolutely dreading the dark nights. I'm hoping I've got a boyfriend by then. (Betty laughs, then takes some photographs of her husband from the sideboard drawer and shows them to us).

Betty talked at length about her husband's illness up to his death and her mood began to lighten to the point where Joy got up to leave. However, I felt that I owed it to Betty to stay until she was in a more positive frame of mind. We talked about how she might solve her problem of loneliness. 'You'll have to join a dating agency' I suggested lightly. When she spoke of a 'gentleman friend' who she 'would probably get together with', she offered to 'invite (me) to the wedding'. I knew that it was a good time to leave.

My final sample of residents comprises: eighteen women ranging in age from fourteen to late seventies; thirteen men from mid-twenties to early seventies. As I only interviewed two teenage women, no teenage men, and no-one younger, youths and children are under-represented. This was undoubtedly an omission from the research. I was able to access a range of household types: three divorcees living alone, two widows, four older married couples whose children had left home, and eight younger married couples with children.

Working 'up' and working 'down'

Qualitative data is usually complex and computers are ideally suited for assisting in the management of complex data (Richards and Richards 1998). Although there is a variety of software available for handling ethnographic data (see for example Fielding 1993b), I selected the NUD*IST program for its data storage, coding and analysis, and theory-building capabilities. I do not intend to provide a detailed account of NUD*IST's features as others have done so

elsewhere (eg. Durkin 1997; Richards and Richards 1994; Weitzman 2000). Instead, I want to provide a reflexive account of how NUD*IST assisted my data management and analysis, and how one feature of the program resulted in erroneous interpretation of the data.

Qualitative researchers usually develop theoretical ideas by working ‘up’ from the data and working ‘down’ from existing theory (Richards and Richards 1998: 213). Working ‘up’ from the data involves: ‘building new understandings from ‘thick descriptions’; reflecting on and exploring data records; discovering patterns and constructing and exploring impressions, summaries, pen portraits’ (Richards and Richards 1998: 213). In working ‘down’ from theory researchers ‘incorporate, explore, and build on prior theoretical input, on hunches or ideas or sometimes formal hypotheses’ (Richards and Richards 1998: 213).

Initial categorisation of the data took three forms: descriptive (residents and location); concepts developed from my research aims and theory which formed a basic organising strategy for the fieldwork (crime, community, fear, environment, lifestyle and gender); concepts derived from the data (class, safety, trust, power, threat, stereotyping, rationalisation, informal social control, change, policing, reputation, ownership, generation, personality, parenting, loneliness). NUD*IST allows data to be structured either in hierarchical trees, or in freenodes which store data with no hierarchical links. Some concepts lent themselves to hierarchical development in extremely fine detail (see Figure 4), owing to the ability to code single lines of text. Others were more suited to coding in freenodes. Although I portray the analytical process as clear-cut and precise, it was in practice complex with considerable overlap between categories, reflecting the ‘messiness’ of research that I mentioned earlier.

Moreover, the subtlety and intuition which guide analysis (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) are difficult to articulate and explain.

Fine coding, or fragmenting data into small analytical pieces, tends to be the main way in which qualitative researchers analyse their data (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). As Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 68) point out, 'faced with a mass of unstructured data, the urge of any researcher is understandably to break these down using some kind of system. The most common system is the code and retrieve method'. However, Hollway and Jefferson argue that fragmenting the data in this way can obscure the relation of coded data to the whole text; a problem which is the most significant weakness in computer-assisted qualitative data analysis.

I experienced a problem not of data fragmentation *per se*, but relating to it. The problem arose from NUD*IST's ability to carry out matrix and vector intersect searches of coded categories of data. Matrix and vector are 'special and especially powerful search operators...valuable for scanning, searching for or validating patterns, and displaying results' (QSR NUD*IST 4 User Guide: 183). They set out in tabular form the results from an intersection of two categories, for example social interaction and gender (see Figure 5). The options for display in the table are either a 1 or 0 according to whether data has been coded in a cell or not, or as in the example shown, the number of units of text coded in each cell. While this approach is rewarding because it sets out information visually in an easily assimilated format, it tends to quantify qualitative data in ways that can be misleading if the results are read too literally, especially in a small study such as mine. This type of search is also particularly prone to coding error or ambiguity, which may misrepresent the number of units of text displayed in the matrix.

Hierarchical coding in NUD*IST

(5 5)	/crime/offender
(5 5 1)	/crime/offender/local
(5 5 2)	/crime/offender/non-local
(5 5 3)	/crime/offender/gender
(5 5 3 1)	/crime/offender/gender/male
(5 5 3 2)	/crime/offender/gender/female
(5 5 4)	/crime/offender/known
(5 5 5)	/crime/offender/unknown
(5 6)	/crime/information
(5 6 1)	/crime/information/networks
(5 7)	/crime/time
(5 7 1)	/crime/time/day
(5 7 2)	/crime/time/night
(5 8)	/crime/threat
(5 8 1)	/crime/threat/property
(5 8 2)	/crime/threat/physical
(5 8 3)	/crime/threat/none
(5 8 4)	/crime/threat/drugs
(5 9)	/crime/attraction
(6)	/fear
(6 1)	/fear/source
(6 1 1)	/fear/source/youths
(6 1 2)	/fear/source/strangers
(6 1 3)	/fear/source/crime
(6 1 3 1)	/fear source/crime/physical
(6 1 3 1 1)	/fear/source/crime/physical/self
(6 1 3 1 2)	/fear/source/crime/physical/other
(6 1 3 2)	/fear/source/crime/property
(6 1 3 3)	/fear/source/crime/other
(6 1 3 4)	/fear/source/crime/none
(6 1 4)	/fear/source/environment
(6 1 4 1)	/fear/source/environment/estate
(6 1 4 1 1)	/fear/source/environment/estate/property
(6 1 4 1 2)	/fear/source/environment/estate/cul-de-sac
(6 1 4 1 3)	/fear/source/environment/estate/walkway
(6 1 4 2)	/fear/source/environment/town centre
(6 1 4 3)	/fear/source/environment/open space
(6 1 4 4)	/fear/source/environment/other
(6 1 4 5)	/fear/source/environment/none
(6 1 5)	/fear/source/solitude
(6 1 6)	/fear/source/reprisals

Figure 4

Matrix intersect search in NUD*IST
Fear effects & base data/respondents/gender

effects	male	female
inaction	6	18
avoidance	70	137
awareness	34	31
support	0	0
rationalization	53	93
other	34	35
none	4	32
change lifestyle	50	76
feeling unsafe	35	32

Figure 5

Fortunately data analysis is not a discrete process. As Bryman and Burgess (1994: 217) point out, 'research design, data collection and analysis are simultaneous and continuous processes'. Problems which may occur through data fragmentation tend to get ironed out in the overall process as the researcher moves between detail and overview. The facility in NUD*IST for coding single lines of text is extremely useful because it involves a detailed inspection of the data. Nuances which may be less apparent in the overall transcription may easily be missed. Conversely, as Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 69) make clear, it is also important to understand the 'whole' text in order to make sense of its constituent parts; a process of contextualisation. In NUD*IST it is possible to contextualise coded fragments of data using a spread facility which places the fragment back in its surrounding text. However, re-reading typed transcripts and fieldnotes gave me a sense of the whole which the computer could not achieve.

Protecting confidentiality

I decided at the outset of my research that the identities of the people and places I observed would be concealed. Protecting confidentiality is not only necessary in the final written text but also during the research process (Arksey and Knight 1999). In interviews I used only first names and coded addresses so that tapes would not divulge information which obviously related to any particular individual. I transcribed the interviews thereby ensuring no-one had access to these or my field notes. While I did not regard much of my data to be particularly sensitive, I was conscious that participants had discussed aspects of their private lives as well as their routines and security arrangements which could have unfortunate repercussions in the wrong hands.

The problem with offering confidentiality is that absolute confidentiality is impossible to achieve (Christians 2000; Kidder and Judd 1986). As Christians

(2000: 139) points out, 'pseudonyms and disguised locations are often recognized by insiders' (see also Punch 1998: 176). With the limited number of participants who took part in my research accurate descriptions and details of what I observed in the field make that likelihood greater. Changing details on the other hand would affect contextual specificity and the nature of analysis (Arksey and Knight 1999). The small-scale and in-depth investigation of one particular place made specificity more critical, especially since context was a fundamental aspect of my research. This situation raises dilemmas in which the use of pseudonyms serves only as a compromise. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 285) argue, 'while ethical considerations are important they cannot be satisfactorily resolved by appeal to absolute rules, and...the effective pursuit of research should be the ethnographer's main concern'.

I do not subscribe to the view that effective pursuit of research should override the interests of participants at all costs. But what are the alternatives? One solution would have been not to conduct the research at all but this would have resulted in the neglect of social processes of which little study has been made. A better understanding of informal social control may provide benefits to both affluent and poor communities through improvements to community crime prevention policies which reflect the needs of localities. Another approach is to 'seriously and self-reflexively "deconstruct" our practices so that we can "reconstruct" them with fewer negative consequences' (Richardson 1992: 119). Richardson (1992: 119) advocates the use of 'different' methods, such as participatory research, and 'breaking genre' through for instance community authorship to change the author/subject relationship of research. However, these approaches are only likely to work if there is sufficient interest in the community being studied.

Professional etiquette dictates that ‘no one deserves harm or embarrassment as a result of insensitive research practices’ (Christians 2000: 139). Fielding (1993a) concedes that it is not always possible to predict the likely consequences of research. He asks: ‘Are we to desist from our study when harm *might* result at some unknown future time?’ (Fielding 1993: 169a - italics in original). If the sole aim of research should be to produce knowledge (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995), it is necessary to balance the potential harm of the research against its benefits to knowledge (Fielding 1993a; Kidder and Judd 1986). Again this may be difficult to assess; ‘it is not always clear what is in whose interests’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 273).

To what extent might my participants be harmed or embarrassed by my research? My study provided a snapshot of a locality at a given point in time. Since places are made up of dynamic social processes (Massey 1994), they change over time and the effects of the research are likely to be dissipated as people move on or their circumstances change. At an individual level I have endeavoured to provide a fair and honest representation of people’s accounts. However, I acknowledge that by painting a negative picture of suburban life I may have neglected the positive aspects. Situating suburbia in a wider context by focusing on the socially excluding nature of suburban life avoids criticisms of idealised localism levelled at earlier community studies (see Introduction). While I have been critical of the affluent middle class, harm (and this depends on its definition) is less likely to arise for a powerful sector of society which is capable of defending its position.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed my research methods and methodology. Despite critiques of ethnography I have argued that it remains the most suitable means of studying a cultural group in its context. The combination of observations,

participant observation and interviews are complementary in describing and understanding social phenomena, interactions and activities in a given setting. However, the motives, intentions and values of the researcher, and their physical presence in the field, will influence the research process. For this reason I have given a reflexive account of the conditions which gave rise to my research and the views I took with me to the field and into the interpretative process. I now turn to the issues which arose from my research, beginning with 'community' and identity in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

‘Keeping themselves to themselves’
Community and identity

Introduction

In chapter 1 I described a world of rapid change and uncertainty; one widely portrayed in macrosocial debates as ‘an increasingly dangerous place in which to live’ (Jones Finer and Nellis 1998: 1). It is a world in which one vision of ‘community’ may be ‘that of an island of homely and cosy tranquillity in a sea of turbulence and inhospitality’ (Bauman 2000: 182). Yet society is fragmented, individualistic and short of collective endeavour; a world in which ‘community’ has perhaps become nothing more than ‘a lost ideal of a more intimate society’ (Hoggett 1997: 11). It is also a world in which globalism increasingly separates a sense of community from a sense of place (Hoggett 1997).

Nevertheless, although there is little consensus about what ‘community’ actually means (Evans 1997) both the notions of ‘community’ and ‘place’ remain important to individuals (Girling et al 2000; Phillipson et al 1999; Taylor et al 1996). In this chapter I argue that in the suburban context of my research, like many traditional working-class communities, notions of ‘community’ were constructed from a social identity symbolically bounded in ‘place’. However, unlike traditional communities, which were built around work (see for instance Dennis et al 1969), ‘place’ for this suburban community was a dormitory (Pahl 1965) to which residents could retreat from work. ‘Place’ and identity were also used defensively. Marked by the polarisation of oppositions (Woodward 1997) - inclusion and exclusion, social order and social breakdown, harmony and chaos - ‘place’ and identity provided a sense of security in an uncertain world.

Defining community

‘Community’ is certainly a vague term (Hoggett 1997; Sennett 1971; Shapland and Vagg 1988) judging by the number of definitions it has attracted, and the

way the concept has been used 'to perform many different functions in the description and analysis of society' (Dennis and Daniels 1994: 202). Jary and Jary (1995: 100) loosely define community as 'any set of social relationships operating within certain boundaries, locations or territories'. Crow and Allan (1994: 1) similarly qualify community as being 'beyond the private sphere of home and family but more familiar to us than the impersonal institutions of the wider society'. In late modern societies, however, this view is too restrictive. Abstract and ideological notions of community abound, such as the 'global civilization' (Truett Anderson 1990: 20), and the new virtual communities of cyberpunk (Burrows 1997) and cyberspace (McBeath and Webb 1997) on the World Wide Web. Communities may also be imagined (Anderson 1991), 'invented' (Lash and Urry 1994: 316), or even based on taste (Bourdieu 1984).

Notwithstanding these broader contexts in which communities exist, in its simplest of definitions 'community' means a situation in which people share something in common (Crow and Allan 1994; Sennett 1971). Most variations of 'community' are encompassed by Willmott's (1987a: 2) categorisation: 'territorial communities' defined by geography; 'interest communities' in which a group of people share something in common other than territory; and 'attachment communities' which are characterised by a sense of belonging to relationships or places. These are not, of course, mutually exclusive and may to some extent overlap (Willmott 1987b; Shapland and Vagg 1988). Above all the notion of 'community' has an enduring appeal, as Howard Newby (in Crow and Allan 1994: xi) neatly sums up: 'a totem of how we would like our lives to be' - and I would argue no more so than in the residential context.

What constitutes a good community? This is as much a conundrum as the definition of community itself since individuals attach different meanings in different contexts, influenced by their own values, aspirations and experiences

(Crow and Allan 1994). McBeath and Webb (1997) suggest that both ancient and contemporary notions of community connote stability, order, security and ontological security, regularity and self-regulation in conditions of close proximity. These conditions reflect the idealised community of 'gemeinschaft' (Tonnies 1955; 1957), where the unity of individuals, locality and 'co-operation and co-ordinated action for a common goal' existed in a context of cultural homogeneity (Tonnies 1957: 42). In the gemeinschaft view of community social solidarity and homogeneity were represented as beneficial conditions of community life.

However, as Brent (1997) argues, communities also exist without unity. Communities are multi-dimensional; they can be excluding and divisive and their divisions may be internal as well as external (Brent 1997; Crow and Allan 1994). For example, the romantically idealised and nostalgic image of traditional working class occupational communities found in the 'golden age of community' (Suttles 1972: 9) in early twentieth century Britain is a myth (Anderson 1994; Crow and Allan 1994). In some cases these communities existed in a 'rather limited world' (Dennis et al 1969: 178) and were 'internally divided by status, gender, ethnic and occupational distinctions' (Clapson 1998: 63). Their characteristics of homogeneity and social cohesion were often contingent on a rigidly hierarchical and patriarchal system based on male solidarity and female oppression (Dennis et al 1969; Klein 1965; Massey 1994). And yet 'community' was also a survival mechanism often kept together by the women (Bulmer 1986).

Dennis et al's (1969) study of a Yorkshire mining village highlighted strong bonds between the menfolk. These bonds were established through shared gruelling and hazardous working experiences in the mines, and reinforced in leisure pursuits outside the home which catered only for the men. Home was 'a

haven for the tired man when he returns from work; here he expects to find a meal prepared, a room clean and tidy, a seat comfortable and warm, and a wife ready to give him what he wants' (Dennis et al 1969: 179). Women, by contrast, were virtual domestic slaves, underpinned by a national ideology of 'woman's place is in the home' (Dennis et al 1969: 174; Chambers 1997). As Massey (1994: 193-4) describes, a miner's work resulted in an enormous domestic burden for his wife:

Underground work was filthy and this was long before the installation of pithead showers and protective clothing. Working clothes had to be boiled in coppers over the fire which had to heat all the hot water for washing clothes, people and floors. Shift-work for the men increased women's domestic work: clothes had to be washed, backs scrubbed and hot meals prepared at all times of the day or night.

Men, who were oppressed at work, were often tyrants in the home (Dennis et al 1969; Massey 1994). Despite these conditions within, however, it was the stable, homogeneous and cosy image which created their appeal from the outside [Clapson 1998; Suttles 1972]. For the ingrained sentimentality of 'community' enures in many ways; evident for example in the proliferation of 'village' imagery used to promote housing developments, even in urban areas (Cummings 1999). As Cummings (1999: 15) points out, community is as much a political ideal as it is social; 'the notion that community is an unqualified Good Thing has been firmly established - not only in the liberal mind, but in social policy, and especially in housing'. In a 'dangerous' world, 'community' has become synonymous with safety (Bauman 2000; Cummings 1999).

Some working-class communities were defined by extended kinship networks in conditions of close spatial proximity which contributed to their sociability, solidarity and mutual support (Clapson 1998). For example, Young and Willmott's (1957) study of Bethnal Green in East London revealed how close family ties enhanced and promoted ties into the wider community: each family connected not only to their relatives and friends, but also to their relatives'

friends. However, Finch (1994) argues that communities based on the extended family were a minority in social life. In fact the privatised, nuclear family isolated from community life associated with the middle classes existed throughout the social spectrum from the seventeenth century (Hareven 1994). Stacey's (1960) study of Banbury emphasised the importance of the immediate, rather than extended family, as the functioning social unit among the working class.

Furthermore, the working class have long led a home-centred and privatised rather than communal existence (Devine 1989; 1992). In communities of dense social networks the home was a private domain, away from the intrusiveness of street socialising which engendered much ill-feeling (Klein 1965). Individualism was only orientated towards the middle class to the extent that some members of the working class did not have the resources to survive on their own (Jamieson 1994), and the neighbourhood provided a 'safety net' against domestic and structural problems (Bulmer 1986: 92). Many working-class families who moved out of their traditional habitats through slum clearance welcomed the privacy and social distancing of their new situations (Clapson 1998), and adopted more privatised lifestyles (see for instance Willmott and Young 1960; Willmott 1963).

Suburbia is often seen as an ideal basis for community life because it features social and cultural homogeneity and solidarity through common identity (Archer 1997). However, as Young (1999) argues, identity replaces rather than reinforces community spirit. Homogeneity and conformity actually depress the vitality of social life (Gans 1967) because they allow people to feel comfortable with one another without having to interact with one another (Sennett 1971). Furthermore, the solidarity of a common identity based on similarity highlights and reinforces difference (Foucault 1986; Sennett 1971; Woodward 1997).

Differentiation is expressed spatially by the concentration of the common ideological characteristics of a social group through architectural (Archer 1997; Risebero 1996) and environmental (Duncan and Duncan 1997) means. For example, the cul-de-sac becomes the 'significant social unit in the community' (Gans 1967: 173) in which the setting and control of symbolic boundaries not only denotes difference and similarity, exclusion and inclusion (Sibley 1995; Suttles 1972; Woodward 1997), but also reinforces the myth of community life (Sennett 1971).

In this chapter I describe a territorial community in which togetherness is expressed as a fear of otherness. The 'community' is socially fragmented; a group of individuals leading atomised, private lives based on superficial neighbourly contact within limited social and support networks. However, they maintain a strong collective identity rooted in a bounded sense of place. The notion of 'community' is symbolically constructed by fixing social and physical boundaries which display allegiance to a protective view of the area distinct from what is seen as the troubled nature of the wider world outside (Evans 1997). Narratives which focus on 'landscapes of fear' (Taylor et al 1996: 279) outside those boundaries reinforce the suburb's exclusiveness and purity.

One means of exploring issues of 'community' and 'identity' in terms of similarity and difference, security and threat, is to look at the 'rumour and myth' that figure in the way people 'talk about crime' (Taylor 1995: 277). As Evans (1997: 49 - italics in original) points out, 'looking at the experience of crime helps us to see how people *use* their sense of community and of neighbourhood'. Girling et al (2000: 15) suggest that crime-talk is about 'moral commitments, concerns, attachments and identifications' which make up 'the political and moral resonances of the category 'crime' and of its implication in experiences of social change'. For example, crime-talk relates to what kinds of

place people believe their community has been, ought to be, or is in danger of becoming in the future (Loader et al 1998). I highlight crime-talk which not only focuses on a narrow view of crime based on predation and violence (Felson 1994; Reiner 1997) from outsiders, but also makes the 'outgroup' the scapegoat for the troubles of wider society (Young 1999: 20).

A 'real community'

I feel very safe here...it's as safe as one could be. I have neighbours that work all different hours and there's always somebody in....we all keep our eye on one another. If ever anyone's ill we all know about it, we all knock at the door, we all care. We are a real community.
(Fiona)

According to Sennett (1998: 137) 'a place becomes a community when people use the pronoun "we"'. This is because the 'social bond arises most elementally from a sense of mutual dependence' (Sennett 1998: 139). Fiona's sense of 'community' did not rely on density of networks as in the traditional communities mentioned earlier. Apart from an exchange of pleasantries with neighbours in the cul-de-sac, and other people when she walked her dog on the estate, Fiona's community of mutual support extended to seven of the twenty two households in Ash Close. Yet those few social connections, and the fact that she 'loved the area' and its 'genuinely nice people' made Fiona feel 'quite contented'. Fiona's community was 'imagined' in the same way that the nation-state exists for some people as a feeling of 'deep horizontal comradeship', despite the fact that few members ever get to know one another and regardless of the divisions that may prevail (Anderson 1991: 6-7).

Bauman (2000: 108) might argue that Fiona's limited social networks reflected the wider social trend of 'fragility or fluidity of social bonds'. According to Bauman (2000: 6), the fixed, dependable solidity of modernity has given way to a new 'fluid modernity' characterised by transiency and impermanence

where the 'bonds which interlock individual choices in collective projects and actions' are being 'melted'. Configurations and patterns of dependency and interaction have been refashioned into an 'individualised, privatised version of modernity' (Bauman 2000: 7-8). I do not dispute that changes are occurring in some aspects of social life as a result of advances in technology and globalisation. Leisure, for example, has become a privatised and domestic form of consumption (Chaney 1996) through television and home video (Jackson 1991). However, I suggest that, certainly for the middle class, many of these changes are concurrent with an underlying social continuity.

Although middle class social life has not been documented to the extent of the working class (Edgell 1980; Klein 1965), commentaries on the middle classes (eg. D'Cruze 1994; Jackson 1991; Pahl 1965; Stacey 1960; Stacey et al 1975) indicate that privatism and individualism are characteristics of continuity rather than change. In the middle of the twentieth century, for example, more resources among the middle class offered them greater independence (Stacey 1960). Social and geographical mobility resulted in a wider net of social contacts (Klein 1965; Stacey 1960). Community life and close kinship were sacrificed in favour of loose-knit social networks and a stronger conjugal bond (Klein 1965). Segregation, privacy and individualism underpinned the centrality of family life (Jackson 1991). Neighbourhoods were not a source of friendship: 'People in very loose-knit networks rarely know more than a couple of others in the same network: friends don't know the friends of friends, they don't know the relatives, relatives don't keep in touch much, no-one knows the neighbours' (Klein 1965: 345).

Fiona's social life echoed these patterns. Her busy social life did not involve her neighbours and co-residents. Apart from an occasional 'bottle of wine in the garden' with Colin, the odd outing with Janet, 'but not on a regular basis',

and a one-off invitation to a birthday meal with Neil and Cathy's family, Fiona's social life largely took place away from the estate. 'I have got a lot of friends' she pointed out:

With me being divorced I'm in singles clubs and that kind of thing and I go rambling and I also go ballroom dancing. There's a lot goes on socially where I work....at (a local hotel), I swim there and....there's dancing and different things, I have quite a full life actually. But as regards this area....no, I know people, not necessarily by name. Everyone's very friendly, but I don't actually go out with people.

Fiona's 'community' may have been a sentimental idealisation (Cohen 1996), or it may have been based on exchange (Bulmer 1986), developed out of a commonality of experience, since her networks were made up of people like herself who had undergone great upheaval in their lives. Most were single people living alone as a result of divorce or widowhood, apart from Neil and Cathy who were a young couple recently married. '(Cathy's) only young and she's nervous....her husband's away a lot' Fiona explained, 'and she was so thrilled because she'd got my number and she knew she could ring me'. The feeling of togetherness that Fiona described undoubtedly provided a reciprocal psychological and ontological security system which other people found in their families (Jackson 1991).

Fiona's sense of community may also have been defensive following the arrival of a family who were tenants rather than owners. As I discuss later, the prospect of properties being let rather than sold was her main 'worry about the neighbourhood'. The family were regarded as 'outsiders' who were different and inferior (Elias and Scotson 1994) and, as Wilson (1997: 134) notes, 'the appearance of the stranger sharpens the identity of the established resident, but often in a paranoid fashion, if the stranger is seen as a threat to that identity'. Indeed, Sennett (1998: 138) recognises that the use of 'we' in contemporary society may also be an act of self-protection.

‘Everybody keeps to themselves’

The nature of Fiona’s social networks and social life reflected a general pattern among most of my interviewees, apart from some residents in Coniston Close as I discuss later. The privatism associated with the middle class way of life seemed to have a structural influence on the people who lived in the suburb and, at the same time, was perpetuated by their individual and collective actions. This interaction of structure and agency highlights the duality of structure (Giddens 1984) inherent in the suburban way of life. I highlight this influence in the examples of four people who had moved to Uppenhall from previously sociable or close-knit social environments. Despite their attempts to develop social contacts in the locality, they found themselves absorbed into an atomised existence from the pressure of wider social forces, such as people’s busy work and leisure routines. But, as I shall illustrate, structural influences (Giddens 1984) are mediated locally in various ways which allow individuals a certain amount of freedom from the constraining aspects of structure.

Rose found the atomisation on the estate quite a contrast to the Welsh village community of her upbringing. When she came to live on the estate she was determined to establish social contact with other residents. ‘I’m a bit more outgoing than a lot of people’ she said ‘because when I moved here I made sure that I knew all my neighbours. I went round and knocked on their doors, I’m so and so, who are you?’ Rose admitted that ‘they were all a bit shocked’ by her approach and maintaining contact was an ‘uphill struggle’. ‘Everybody’s gone back to their little ways’ she said with disappointment. Phillipson et al (1999) note that length of residence has often been cited as an important element in the development of neighbouring. However, after fifteen years Rose had come to accept that ‘obeying the rules’ (Foster 1999: 168) meant that ‘everybody keeps to themselves’.

Joy found a problem building up new social networks after moving to the area a year before the fieldwork because of her husband's job relocation. She was used to moving frequently and had learned to establish social networks quickly in order to help her feel settled, and to avoid the loneliness of being at home on her own in the daytime. Visits to the town prior to moving indicated a friendly place, but once she and her husband moved into their new home she found nobody of her own age around during the day. 'It's only the older folk who are around' Joy pointed out, 'everyone younger's out at work all day...both the men and the women'.

Many studies have shown the importance of women's networks in establishing and maintaining local support and a strong sense of community (see for instance Bulmer 1986; Chambers 1997; Foster 1999; Willmott 1963; Willmott and Young 1960). Women also take a more central role in neighbouring than men (Crow 1997). Lisa observed more interactions between the women in Ash Close despite many of them going out to work full time. 'It's always them that are like gossiping and talking' she said, 'where the men tend to keep themselves to themselves'. In Coniston Close the women neighboured and socialised when not at work but, as Sonia pointed out, the men were linked more by their interests:

Mike and Doug are very close because they're very DIYish. Geoff's often playing rugby on a Saturday. Mike will probably be working. Doug's normally doing something.....and then the others....like Barry and Pete, they're...very quiet. I wouldn't say that they get together to do anything.....they go off to do their own things.

However, as Chambers (1997) found, in her study of women's experiences of early suburban development in Sydney, women entering paid employment fragmented the community of women and led to the isolation of those who remained at home. One woman in Foster's (1999: 192) study of London's Docklands describes how a sense of community was experienced by the

affluent 'wifey types' who did not work, but not by the 'nine to fivers' who were 'rushing to work (and) back from work' leaving no time to get to know other people.

Moreover, as Devine (1989; 1992) found among members of an affluent working-class community in Luton, home-centred and privatised lifestyles resulted from busy working lives which left little time or energy for socialising with neighbours. Devine's findings may explain Joy's experience. 'Once (my husband's) home we're in our own home, everyone else is in their own home' Joy remarked, 'there's no mingling I don't think....(people) just stay within their own family and friends'. Bob said the same of his neighbours in Fir Tree Close. Despite their friendliness and sociability he pointed out that 'there's no social life whatsoever'. 'Everyone keeping their distance?' I asked. 'It's not at a distance because you want to be at a distance' Bob replied, 'it's at a distance because people have their occupations that come first and you don't see them between seven-o'clock in the morning and five-o'clock at night...and at weekends they want to keep themselves to themselves and do their own thing'.

Linda and Paul noticed the impact 'everyone working' had on social interaction in Uppenhall compared to their previous location where 'people were at home all day'. They had moved from a semi-detached house in a close-knit cul-de-sac in Colliers End, a relatively deprived area on the east side of the town (see Figure 1). Although they had experienced no problems in their cul-de-sac, they moved because they felt the area was 'going downhill' (a problem of bad reputation which I discuss later - see also Bottoms and Wiles 1986). In fact, according to Paul, their close was 'so friendly, everybody knew each other....it was close-knit'.

By contrast Linda and Paul found the social distance and lack of community spirit in Uppenhall 'strange'. 'It's not a close neighbourhood at all' Linda said, 'people are quite isolated I think. If you had a tendency to be a bit shy or a bit withdrawn you could die and nobody would notice'. However, they had come to adopt the way of life of the estate despite having enjoyed the social cohesiveness of their former location. 'I think the longer we've been here we've tended to get like the people' Paul said, 'we've tended to close in ourselves a little bit because of how it is here'.

Despite the fact that some people in their previous location 'held high positions - a school teacher, a chemist, a police superintendent', Linda and Paul described themselves and their previous neighbours as 'working class'. However, to simply apply a class analysis to the social differences between the two areas, based on middle class atomisation and working class homogeneity, risks taking the sentimentalist view that I mentioned earlier. Just as the working class can lead privatised existences, the example of Coniston Close illustrates how dense networks and social cohesion can occur in affluent middle class social groups.

'Everybody joins in'

All of the residents with whom I spoke in Coniston Close acknowledged the close-knit atmosphere of the cul-de-sac. 'It's a very unusual close' Sonia said 'everybody's watching out for everybody. We have some great social activities, all of us...not everybody joins in, but...that's not a problem'. Frank agreed: 'the social life is absolutely incredible. I think the first day that we moved in we had a letter pushed through the door asking us to go to a party'. 'It's lovely' Karen added, 'we're very sociable, we have parties...street parties. We tend to hide away a bit in the winter as everybody does but come the summer....last summer it got to the stage when there was a barbecue every week. There's a few that

choose not to take part in the social scene but, there's no falling out, everybody gets on really well'.

Factors other than class impacted on the 'neighbourliness' (Bulmer 1986) of Coniston Close. Bulmer (1986) defines neighbourliness as a positive and committed relationship between neighbours, a form of friendship, which may be a feature of the setting, the characteristics of the individuals, and their social networks which lock them together. The insularity of Coniston Close, bounded by a school, the railway line, and the Uppenhall council estate may have served to reinforce the distinct identity of the close (see chapter 6 for a development of this argument). Certainly social networks were dense within the close (everybody knew everybody), but not beyond.

Children provide a catalyst for social networks, especially among women, in terms of reciprocal support (Bulmer 1986; Chambers 1997; Foster 1999). As Suttles (1972) points out, children tend to bring together parents who might otherwise lead an atomised existence. Despite the age range in the close, 'everything from...late twenties, thirties up to retiring age', at least half of the households had children at a similar stage of their life-cycle. Sonia admitted that 'everything revolves around the children...we have a rounders match and barbecue in the summer and the kids thought that was great...because it was theirs...we played their games'.

As Bulmer (1986) argues, patterns of neighbouring have their own careers and histories which are related to the stability and mobility of residence. Doug said 'people...feel settled down here'; all but two of the residents were original occupiers from when the houses were built (the two who left had got divorced). 'We're more sort of homely people' Doug added. However, individual characteristics may also have been important. As Sonia explained, the success

of the close could be attributed to the personalities and motivation of certain members:

I say we've got our 'drivers'...there's Geoff over the road....he's one of these people that...he's always doing things for charity and he's always....very kind and very helpful and then the other one is Doug....he's a driver because they're doers....they're very practical people....and....like, I'm a manager and I manage at work but when I'm at home I don't want to manage...I want somebody to manage me so I'm quite happy for somebody to take that role (laughs)....and it works.

Bulmer (1986: 85) describes two types of personality in neighbouring: 'isolates' and 'sociometric stars'. However, I argue that Bulmer's focus on two extremes of personality neglects the continuum between. Geoff and Doug's organising capabilities perhaps made them sociometric stars in Coniston Close. Their influence radiated out through the close like ripples on water: Sonia did not want to organise, but was happy to join in; David and Karen liked to get involved when it suited them; Pete occasionally came along to the social events; then there were the 'four that'll never come'.

Constructing identity

Woodward (1997) claims that a search for identity follows change, such as the break-up of personal relationships. A 'crisis of identity' also follows major social, economic and political transformations which take effect at both global and local levels (Woodward 1997: 1). Woodward (1997:1-2) argues that identity not only provides 'a location in the world and presents the link between us and the society in which we live' but also 'marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are different from those who do not'. However, I argue that the use of identity to denote and separate out difference forms a continuity in many aspects of social life, rather than merely being the result of change.

Sameness and difference are marked symbolically through representational systems (Woodward 1997), such as architecture (Risebero 1996) and the environment (Duncan and Duncan 1997; Lash and Urry 1994). Risebero (1996: 217) suggests that 'architecture is a language which can and does transmit ideological messages'. Chaney (1997: 144), for example, argues that the 'contradiction between community and the fragmentation of competitive individualism in the collective fictions of suburban experience' is coped with ideologically by a search for authenticity in the 'mythological domain of tradition'. Thus, the suburban architectural palette rejects modernist designs in favour of superficial historicism by the reproduction of period styles and references (Chaney 1997; Oliver 1981b). Nostalgia and tradition present a metaphoric framework based on the certainties of the past as a means of validating the suburban utopian vision of the communal ideal as a contrast to the frightening image of the incoherent city and the dangerous other (Chaney 1997).

Of course, authenticity is a myth because places have multiple identities 'constructed out of the juxtaposition, the intersection, the articulation, of multiple social relations' (Massey 1994: 137). However, as Massey concedes, the authenticity of place is often used as an argument to resist change. Furthermore, Lash and Urry (1994: 211) argue that the commodification of place often involves an 'increased sensitivity to local features...and place myths'. 'Place-image' becomes important because it captures the core product of a locality and establishes an identity, such as a peaceful and secure environment, which distinguishes one place from another (Lash and Urry 1994: 215). Thus, the suburban 'polite community' contrasts with urban danger and disintegration and their 'nightmare visions of impolite disrespect' (Chaney 1997: 143). As Bauman (2000: 92) perceptively suggests, 'community' is a

good selling point', especially when it offers 'the utopia of harmony slimmed down....to the size of the immediate neighbourhood'.

'The residential area'

The 'place-image' of my research setting was clearly apparent both physically and in the way people talked about the area. As I travelled southwest from Minington town centre along the Milton Road, crossing the railway line gave me a sense of having arrived - at somewhere special. This was not due entirely to the change from urban to suburban character, or the fact that back-of-pavement terraces gave way to large, opulent dwellings with capacious frontages: a brick and tile backdrop to pretty cherry blossom trees which lined the street. There were other areas in the town which offered similar contrasts.

The railway line represented a notional boundary (Suttles 1972) which not only separated Uppenhall physically from the town centre, but also formed a symbolic and cultural divide between east and west. It was a divide which broadly reflected the 'geography of difference' (Massey 1995: 339) apparent in the polarisation of home-owners and non-owners (Saunders 1990a) in the town. In the west were mainly high status, owner-occupier residential areas, such as Hightown Park, Meadow View and Uppenhall, while the east was noted for its poorer areas of Millfields, Colliers End and Lower Bank, with high levels of council housing (see Figure 1).

Massey (1994: 121) argues that boundaries constrain the conceptualisation of place and instead we should view places as 'open and porous networks of social relations'. However, people perceive the places in which they live as bounded and separate from other areas in order to emphasise a particular quality: uniqueness, status, or distinction, just as they put boundaries around other places which denote difference, lower status or danger (Brent 1997;

Evans 1997; Taylor 1995). Boundaries are also constructed in response to perceived conflict or threat (Dennis and Daniels 1994). Taylor (1995) notes in his study of Manchester how the ‘village’ of Hale in Cheshire, an ‘ideal-typical example of (the) English Victorian suburb’, was identified by residents as ‘part of the county of Cheshire’. It was ‘decidedly *not* in Manchester’, despite the fact that ‘to a stranger looking at a map’ Hale was ‘unambiguously within the massive sprawl of South Manchester’ (Taylor 1995: 264-5, italics in original).

Reputation, whether desirable or not, has a direct impact on the lives of the inhabitants of a neighbourhood (Cohen 1996). The reputation of Uppenhall was enhanced by the sense of exclusiveness which geographical distinction implied. ‘I wouldn’t tell people I lived in Minington, I’m a snob’ Fiona said unashamedly,

(people ask) ”do you live in Minington?”. “Certainly not, I live in Uppenhall”, because we’re right out of town....we’re in between Minington and (a neighbouring town)....and people say, it isn’t just me, I’ve heard people say “Oh no, I don’t live in Minington.....we live in Uppenhall.

The fixing of boundaries reinforced social as well as geographical distinction as Fiona’s admission to being a ‘snob’ reveals. Bob emphasised the point: ‘(people) have bought into a community which we would call exclusive’ he said ‘if you say to people you live in Uppenhall, they say “oh, you’ve got to get your passport stamped to come up there”, because it is *the* residential area’.

Foster (1999), in her Docklands study, found similar terminology used in local gossip to denote distinction among the poor islanders. However, their ‘boundaries’ were established around length of residence rather than exclusivity. In Muker parish in North Yorkshire, Phillips (1994) noted that length of association and local dialect, amongst other factors, were markers of cultural difference. Newcomers found themselves ‘mucking in’ to gain

acceptance in the community; a strategy which provided a defence against change by ensuring the preservation of local community practices in a way specified by the locals (Phillips 1994: 236).

Social status and identity are also symbolically represented in the distinctive suburban environment (Chaney 1997; Duncan and Duncan 1997). The landscape expresses suburban ideals relating to rural values and traditions embodied in the pastoral and picturesque (Chaney 1997; Duncan and Duncan 1973; 1997). Fiona's description of her neighbourhood illustrates the role of topography in establishing a particular image which reflects the rural idyll. She also emphasises a kind of solidarity achieved by powerful expectations to conform to norms in keeping up the appearance of the estate (Chaney 1997; Gans 1967). 'I think it's the ideal place to live' she said,

and people that visit me say the same, "you've got a pretty little area here". It is lovely....the trees...make it so nice and there's lots of....park areas with seats and trees...lots of alleyways that you can walk round. There's lots of paths leading off all these culs-de-sac, and then you've got really pretty areas, grassed areas with seats and trees and shrubs. I've got somewhere to walk the dog, I take the dog over the side of the railway line, the fields adjoining there, and...it is pretty. I go down for a paper on a Sunday morning and I really enjoy it...because everyone makes the most of their gardens and their homes, it's a pleasure...to walk (round) here....and you see all the trees and everywhere looking nice...lovely.

Cohen (1996) suggests that images and narratives, such as Fiona's description of her area, are important in the way places are projected. Cohen (1996: 171-172) also argues that narratives map out a 'symbolic landscape of shared and contested territories (and) places of safety and danger'. However, as Fiona's description shows, the same places may be both safe and dangerous according to the context of the narratives. Fiona's idyllic portrayal of the local landscape in daylight, in which certain features such as the alleyways appear innocuous, emphasises the special qualities of the area. Yet, as chapters 4 and 5

illustrate, the parks and alleyways were a source of fear for some women, including Fiona, especially after dark.

‘A bit posh’

Property reflects status because it provides the potential for high capital returns and is therefore a physical and visible expression of affluence and ‘taste’ (Beauregard 1986: 45). Property also symbolically represents personal and group identity (Hamnett 1995; Saunders 1990a). High property values establish an image that enables people to ‘talk up’ their area (Cohen 1996). ‘The houses all around Uppenhall are pretty expensive’ Neil observed. ‘The houses aren’t cheap’ Martin agreed, but Uppenhall was after all ‘an affluent area’ or, to use Linda and Paul’s terminology, ‘a bit posh’. According to one local estate agent a four bedroomed, detached property in Uppenhall could command a price of between £120,000 to £150,000 (1998 price levels), whereas the same type of property in a lower status area in the town would sell for between £80,000 and £100,000, at least a twenty per cent differential. David and Karen chose to pay ‘a bit more’ for their house in Coniston Close whereas they could have bought an identical house on the east side of town for at least ‘ten thousand less’. Lisa reckoned that she had ‘paid over the odds’ but she had paid to live in ‘a nice area’. Colin also moved to Uppenhall to live in a ‘nice area’. ‘I suppose you want me to say what I mean by nice area?’ he asked, ‘I don’t know how to define it...it’s not a rough area, it’s nice....I suppose we’ve got to get into the class thing, I suppose we’ve got to say it’s middle class....it’s a way of defining what I mean’.

Local facilities are essential ‘basics for a nice area to happen’ (Foster 1999: 170). As Foster notes, the infrastructure of an area is important in attracting people with high expectations of choice, such as the middle classes. Facilities also reinforce the image of exclusiveness. Simon considered Uppenhall to be ‘a

prime area' because the 'amenities' and facilities were 'extremely good'. He said 'although we have a car there is a very good bus service at the bottom of the road, we have a parade of shops not very far away...all the facilities that we would certainly be looking for'. Linda and Paul moved to the area 'because of the schools' which offered a better education for their children. While mobility affords access to distant facilities for the affluent (Foster 1999), self-containment through the provision of facilities which reflect the lifestyles of the inhabitants reinforces the exclusive identity of the area and reduces the necessity for social mixing outside (Harloe et al 1992). As Fiona pointed out, 'I very rarely shop in Minington because Uppenhall has such a lot...with garages, paper shops - all the paper shops today sell virtually everything - the only time I'd go to Minington is for Marks and Spencers, that's all. If we had a Marks and Spencers here I wouldn't need to go'.

'Genuinely nice people'

Physical, social and structural boundaries reflect social affiliations, often based on affluence or ethnicity (Suttles 1972). Within those boundaries 'personal safety and (a) sense of security are dependent on a collective image of each other's character which carries some assurances of mutual trustworthiness' (Suttles 1972: 50). Lisa moved to the area because she expected it to be 'safe...as in low crime' because of having 'decent people around her'. Despite knowing few other residents, Fiona felt at ease with most people she encountered on the estate. 'The people are lovely' she said, 'a different class of people, genuinely nice people'. Cyril liked his neighbours. 'We couldn't wish for better people to live by in the area' he said, and yet he had little contact with them other than Simon next door and 'old Charles....down the road'. In the same way that Colin defined his desire to live in a 'nice area' as a 'class thing', these comments about 'nice people' reflect desires for similarity (Sennett 1971) and cultural homogeneity (Suttles 1972). However, in the absence of knowing

one another social identity is established by attitudes, values and tastes through which people are assessed as being the same or different (Chaney 1996; Suttles 1972). But as I now illustrate, social identity is also constructed from a fear of difference.

As I have already stated, boundaries around areas of cultural homogeneity and the 'polite community' they contain are reinforced by powerful and often very individual mythologies of urban danger and social breakdown outside (Chaney 1997: 143). In other words, suburban identity is preserved and enhanced by stereotypical notions of the 'dangerous other' (Chaney 1997: 143) as not belonging to the community of 'decent people'. Moreover, a protective sense of identity can heighten the fear of strangers (Wilson 1997), especially in an environment that excludes their presence (Steventon 1996). Lisa related a couple of incidents which exemplified both points. The first 'was about two years ago' she said,

I was standing in the kitchen (looking out) and this really old...clapped out car came up and it stopped outside my house and these three lads got out. Straight away (I thought)....they're not our sort, they're not from round here and I thought they've overheated, they've got the bonnet up....and the first thing that came into my head is I bet they haven't really, I bet they're sussing the area out....because...they did stick out like a sore thumb.

The second, more recent, incident involved 'a gentleman that came up' Lisa said 'and he just stood outside my house watching it and then he was looking to the house next door. He hadn't got a suit on but he was well dressed, and I thought....is he an estate agent?, or is he somebody that wants to buy a property round here?' Like the residents in Baumgartner's (1988) suburb of Hampton, Lisa was suspicious of both incidents because she perceived the characters as not belonging and to be acting 'out of the ordinary'. As Baumgartner (1988: 104) notes, 'those who appear to be outsiders - by virtue of race or unconventionality - may effectively deviate by their very presence'. However,

Lisa stereotypes the strangers by their appearance and behaviour. Three youths in a 'clapped out' old car definitely do not belong and are associated with crime, while the well-dressed 'gentleman' is thought to be most likely on legitimate business looking to buy (or sell) a property in the area. Interestingly, Lisa's view of the youths was shaken by one's subsequent unexpected behaviour which did not conform to her stereotype. 'He knocked on the door and he was really polite' she said. 'He says "do you mind giving us some water?, we've overheated"', so I gave him this water and he came back and he said - he were quite polite - "thankyou very much"

'Them lot over there'

Physical, social and structural boundaries which reinforce the identity of an area, and highlight the presence of strangers, give rise to a stereotypically suburban fear based on the 'encroachment and contamination of the suburbs by the inner city' (Taylor 1996: 323). Taylor (1996) argues that suburban fears are linked to issues of economic safety and neighbourhood security. Individuals are consumers in a market society and the 'private home' and 'private desires' of everyday life are of symbolic and personal importance. House purchase is an investment decision which is influenced by crime levels. However, as I argue later, evidence suggests that suburban housing is far less likely to be victimised by criminals from inner urban areas since offending mainly occurs *within* communities where offenders live (Bottoms et al 1992; Hope 1995).

Some burglaries in affluent suburban areas fall into the category of dispersed targets (van Koppen and Jansen 1998), where offenders travel further to commit certain crimes. For example, Maguire and Bennett (1982) found in their study of burglary in different types of housing areas that older, more experienced burglars were prepared to travel to wealthy targets. Moreover, they observed that, while most offenders operated within a limited distance of their

own residences, a fact which coincides with other research on offence and offender rates (eg. Baldwin and Bottoms 1976; Bottoms and Wiles 1986; Bottoms et al 1992; Harries 1980; van Koppen and Jansen 1998), in small towns this can take them into different housing areas which are closely situated.

Despite objectively low levels of risk, suburban dwellers see themselves as under external threat in two ways: by people coming from what Cohen (1996: 173) refers to as areas of 'dense concentration of dangerous difference', such as council estates and urban centres, who prey on the suburbs (Girling et al 2000; Taylor 1996); and incomers who move into the area but are seen as different, and perhaps inferior, by the established residents (Elias and Scotson 1994). 'I've always tended to think it's them lot over there...from Lower Bank' Lisa said, blaming 'invaders' (Taylor 1996: 322) from the council estate on the east side of town for local crime. 'We always tend to think it's outsiders' she continued, using Sennett's (1998) defensive 'we', 'you never tend to think it's one of us'. Simon echoed Lisa's concern: 'I think a lot of the crime in Minington comes from (Lower Bank), it's bred in that area. I'm not saying so much it's the council houses but...the Lower Bank area is recognised as a bad area'. Recorded crime data indicated that two thirds of crimes in Uppenhall between February 1995 and November 1996 were committed by people who lived outside the suburb. However, more than half of the offenders who committed crime in the locality lived outside Minington. The remainder came from a variety of deprived areas in the town.

Simon and Lisa's comments above reflect a more generalised stigma attached to council housing (Murie 1998). Undoubtedly, council estates and high-rise developments do inspire public anxiety and official concern, and 'have developed unenviable reputations as the homes of a criminal underclass and also as no-go areas for the population of the surrounding conurbation' (Taylor

1995: 263). The link between council housing and crime is the subject of media attention often enough, and yet it is also borne out in official crime statistics (Murie 1998). As the 1992 British Crime survey shows, the highest crime rates occur in inner urban areas, particularly council owned estates housing low income families (Mayhew et al 1993 [see Figure 8, chapter 5]). Residents in these areas are more than four times likely to be the victims of crime than those in affluent suburban areas (Mayhew et al 1993). Indeed, as my research showed, Millfields, a council housing area near the town centre, experienced almost seven times the number of offences and a greater range of serious crimes than suburban Uppenhall (see chapter 5). Yet residents in these types of area are just as likely to view crime as being committed by 'outsiders' (see for instance Reynolds 1986).

According to Murie (1998), council housing since the war has become the refuge of deprived families and marginalised sectors of the population. The geography of tenure reflects the geography of deprivation in a pattern which generates its own momentum; a pattern of segregation where the affluent move out or avoid moving in (Bottoms and Wiles 1986; Murie 1998). The stigma attached to council housing deterred Neil and Cathy from looking to buy their first house in areas where council estates were concentrated. 'We did see nice houses the other side of Minington like on new estates' Cathy said 'but they were on the back of council estates....so we had to think of things like that'. Like Fiona earlier, Neil and Cathy were concerned about their safety and Uppenhall was perceived to be safer because the housing market dictated the type of people who could afford to live there (Bottoms and Wiles 1986 [see also chapter 6]).

High property prices, Neil felt, kept the 'rougher element' typical of many council estates out of Uppenhall. 'The value of the houses all around Uppenhall

are pretty expensive' Neil said 'so really...there's less likely to be rented (properties), there's less likely to be..council type estates...and the majority of people have actually purchased their houses so obviously there's that sort of "well, it's my area, I've got to look after it, it's an investment"...I think that's got a lot to do with it'. While he considered crime to be a 'fact of life', he felt his and Cathy's decision to locate in the area minimised their risk. 'You do feel a lot safer in an area like this' he suggested,

where you haven't got ruffians sitting on corners. If you're talking about safety that's what we mean by safety-wise. With regards to burglary, I think you can accept the fact that sometime during your life you're gonna be burgled....statistically, I think you expect it at some stage....and that's why.....you insure up to the hilt...because at some stage you know that's going to happen and that's regardless of what area you're in. But you'll feel....more threatened if you've got ruffians sitting outside your doorstep or on the corner or someone throwing paint all over the place....which you wouldn't get in an area like this because the residents wouldn't tolerate it....it would have to be from outside the area.

Neil's comment about 'ruffians' poignantly contrasts with the experiences of residents in the adjacent culs-de-sac who complained about youth nuisance and disorder (see chapter 4). Perhaps Neil's busy life off the estate, or the insularity of the suburban environment, kept him unaware and unconcerned about the activities that took place on the estate beyond his own cul-de-sac and the areas he frequented. On the other hand, the extremely localised nature of the youth nuisance may have had little impact on residents outside that immediate locality.

The unfortunate aspect of the preceding discussion is that stereotypes are often used to justify exclusive attitudes and hostility to difference (Foster 1999) and result in stigma which taints all of the people living in a locality, whether criminally motivated or not. For example, I asked Sonia if there were any areas in the town that she felt reluctant to go to. 'I suppose Lower Bank would be the place' she replied,

because it is quite threatening. We used to live quite close to Lower Bank when we had just got married in a starter home in Colliers End and....I used to drive home through (Lower Bank) and....I don't know why I used to do it because...you used to feel threatened by the fact that there would be houses with broken windows and....the gardens were all a mess and....there would be dogs running out in front of you in the car...I just hated it.

Sonia's comment supports the thesis that environmental cues of disorder precipitate fear (Wilson and Kelling 1982). However, Sonia noticed only the negative aspects of Lower Bank, but failed to balance those with the positive. My visits to Lower Bank also revealed ample evidence of neighbourhood deterioration and neglect, but there was evidence of pride and care in the environment too. However, as Bottoms and Wiles (1986) note, the reputation of an area is extremely important for its social composition and levels of crime because it affects people's decision to live there. A bad reputation means that those who are able move out and those who have a choice refuse to move in leaving a concentrated, socially marginalised minority behind (Bottoms and Wiles 1986).

Stereotypes are also often racially motivated (Foster 1997; 1999; Watt and Stenson 1998). Racism did not feature to any great extent in my research; there were few ethnic minorities living in the area (County census 1991). Although a small number of ethnic minority households may become more identifiable in an area, none of my interviewees expressed any concerns about problems of ethnicity in Uppenhall. However, as Foster (1999: 256) acknowledges, 'foreignness' (sic) is often less of a problem provided it occupies 'somewhere else'. Racial stereotypes persist which link people of different ethnic origin with 'fear, sex and subservience and a powerful image' (Foster 1999: 256). Racial stereotypes also link ethnic minorities with crime, for example, in the racist undertones of Cyril's comment about high crime in one particular area of the town which also happened to be 'an immigrant area'. Local gossip suggested that the source of the problem was the lack of supervision of inmates

in a young offenders' rehabilitation centre which had opened in the area. While some of these youths may have been from ethnic minority backgrounds, Cyril's racial stereotype unfairly implicated the citizens of the area.

A narrow view of crime

As well as stigmatising council housing areas, seeing crime as external to the suburbs is problematic for other reasons too. Crime statistics, for instance, take a narrow view of crime largely committed in the public sphere: acquisitive crime (Hope 1995); violence and sex crimes, particularly for women (Stanko 1990; 1995). Yet as Stanko (1990) argues, the private and hidden nature of men's violence against women means that it is often not seen as crime at all. Moreover, domestic violence (Stanko 1990) and child abuse (Muncie 1999) often go unreported or unrecorded and can therefore misrepresent the picture of crime in an area. Some antisocial activities, such as vandalism, joyriding and hooliganism, which attract critical attention are in fact 'media inspired terms rather than specific offences recognized by the law' (Muncie 1999: 38). Furthermore, as Nelken (1997) notes, crime statistics rarely take account of what Weisburd et al (1991) refer to as the so-called middle-class crimes: white-collar crime (Sutherland 1983; Croall 1992; Nelken 1997) and corporate crime (Box 1983).

White collar crime and corporate crime may involve greater costs and damages and cause more injury and suffering in terms of numbers of victims than acquisitive and violent crime (Muncie 1999). Yet behaviours such as political atrocities, fraud, embezzlement, illegal arms dealing, denial of human rights and environmental pollution, to name but a few, 'are rarely, if ever, considered within discourses of 'crime'' (Muncie 1999: 39). They tend not attract the same degree of moral condemnation (Muncie and McLaughlin 1996). Certainly they are less feared because 'the absence of violence and the diffusion of

victimization...means that offenders are not likely to be seen as 'dangerous' (Croall 1992: 15 [although see Nelken 1997 regarding violent white-collar crime]).

Excluding difference

I have discussed the construction of boundaries as a means of establishing and protecting group identity. The articulation of narratives about danger and disorder outside those boundaries contrasts with images of order, harmony and tranquillity within and emphasises the purity and exclusiveness (Sennett 1971; Sibley 1995) of the suburb. Thus, boundaries are established to protect not only identity but also material and psychological investment in the area, and the intrusion of difference generates fear because it is a threat to investment as well as personal safety (Girling et al 2000). I now want to focus on the threat to identity which occurs when both the structural control of the housing market and the 'spatial power' (Massey 1995: 341) of existing residents fail to keep 'difference' out of the area.

During the extension of Acacia Drive, residents in the earlier phase of the development used their 'spatial power' to protest against a later phase (Ash Close) which they felt would upset the social homogeneity of the area. From its inception the prestige of the estate had been established mainly by detached housing, which maintained house prices at a level that only the affluent could afford. Lisa recalled the difficulty of finding a property in Uppenhall after her divorce. 'Because I was on my own and no children I wanted something small' she pointed out:

Obviously price wise...the property in this area is far more expensive than any other area (so) I was very....astonished to find.....that they were building....first time buyer houses in this area...'cos they'd never done that before, they were either quite large semis or big detached properties....and this is actually...the first....development of first time buyer houses in that price range which I could afford.

The decision to build smaller, terraced houses in the area, rather than semi-detached or detached, resulted from a change in the private housing market. As Colin, another Ash Close resident, explained: 'I believe that when the big houses were built at the front (in Acacia Drive) this was earmarked for the same size houses', he said 'but the market dropped through for those houses at the time and they couldn't sell them so they put these smaller units on'. Other local residents felt threatened by the effect of the lower market value of the development on the value of their own properties (see Harloe et al 1992), and by the *type* of people it might attract and so challenged the development through the planning system. 'People in the other houses complained' Colin said 'so (the developers and the council) came to a compromise. I believe it was the council that said well you've got to raise the spec(ification) so we got the nice brickwork....and the whole courtyard appearance....it looked excellent'.

Despite the size of the units and the terraced layout, the high standard of design and materials kept the price high enough to maintain a level of affluence among prospective purchasers. Lisa admitted that she paid more than the cost of a larger house in a poorer area of the town. 'I paid fifty thousand for this (house)' she said, 'where I could have bought something the other side of Minington, Colliers End, that area which would have cost me about thirty, so I paid over the odds but I'm paying for the area that I live in because it is a nice area'.

'That kind of family in our area'

According to Sibley (1995:87), 'social and environmental homogeneity are mutually reinforcing'. Through the power inherent in the way the housing market combined with resident action, the estate had become what Sibley (1995: 80) refers to as 'strongly classified space'. Strong classification consists of internal homogeneity and clear boundaries which separate that space from

others. Difference in a strongly classified space is seen as deviance and a threat to the power structure. Strong classification 'will reinforce feelings of abjection and the two may be recursively related' (Sibley 1995: 80-81). Sibley's argument can be seen in the way the attempts of local residents in Acacia Drive to control their physical and social environment were undermined when a tenant family moved into Ash Close. The way the family were perceived as different according to tenant stereotypes led to feelings of fear and abjection among their neighbours.

Through a process of social exclusion, the housing market had protected residents' interests. Yet ironically, it was also the 'unintended consequences' (Giddens 1984) of the housing market which threatened their interests. A property in Ash Close had been bought by a young couple but, as Colin explained, 'they couldn't keep up the payments and it was repossessed. One of these housing (associations) bought it and....(now) it's a rented property'. Fiona's concern about the tenancy illustrated a socially exclusive attitude based on the stigmatisation of rented property and tenant stereotypes: 'when property is let...you get people in that are...like (with) council property that have got no respect for the neighbours or for...their property'. 'I was surprised for the area quite honestly' she remarked,

and I just hope every time a house goes up for sale it is not changed to let....because you nearly always have undesirable characters in them. It doesn't always ring true, I mean, you can get some quite respectable people just that they've got to let a place in the area for their job and so on but more often than not there is problem with property that's let especially if (it's a) family with children.

When rumour had it that a 'homeless couple' had moved in feelings of abjection were articulated in the gossip which circulated the close. 'I look over there sometimes and I think huh, I wish they weren't here really' Colin said. Lisa summed up other comments: 'a lady further down the road....(said) "oh, how disgusting it is in an area like this"....a few people have been a bit up in

arms about (them)....saying why have you put that kind of family in our area?’ This last comment illustrates the desire to construct boundaries around ‘us’ and ‘them’ articulated in the possessive way people describe their area as ‘our neighbourhood’ (Suttles 1972: 37).

The attitudes of the Ash Close residents reflect the findings of Elias and Scotson’s (1994) community research in Leicestershire where ‘a relatively old settlement’ had been surrounded by new developments. They found that the newcomers in the cheap, privately rented accommodation were ‘cold shouldered’ and treated as ‘outsiders’ by the residents of the established community, making it difficult for them to take an interest in the community and overcome their isolation (Elias and Scotson 1994: 75). As Elias (1976) points out, the central issue relating to ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ is one of power which involves the exclusion of the power-inferior group from positions of high power potential (see also Foster 1999).

The local reaction to the family was based not only on the idea of intrusion, but also on what was seen as stereotypical behaviour. ‘You can tell by looking at them’ Lisa said, ‘they’ve got the radio blaring in the car and....smacking the kids round the head’. Colin agreed: ‘I’m not looking down my nose at them but they are a bit rougher...you get the shouting in the middle of the night and....they seem to have to scream at the children rather than talk to them and all this....kind of stuff’. Fiona was a ‘dog-lover’ and was more concerned about the way the family treated their own dogs than their children:

It worries me because....they’ve got, I don’t know whether it’s two Alsatians and a... dog that looks like a Pitbull, I just hope it isn’t, I hope it’s one of the other...terriers....and you never see them out, they’re never walked...(and) being a dog lover, it worries me...because when people come to the house if they’re not in it’s the most almighty noise....and I know those dogs are penned in...and it bothers me....but at the end of the day it isn’t my business.

Although Suttles (1972: 50) argues that 'people who share residential areas simply cannot ignore each other, because they are vulnerable to one another', Fiona's last comment suggests an unwillingness to get involved. Fiona's avoidance of what she perceived as a problem instead reflects the culture of 'moral minimalism' that Baumgartner (1988: 3) describes in Hampton, the affluent suburb in which she observed weak social control and avoidance of conflict and confrontation.

'An awful shindig'

Despite the bad impression given of the tenant family in residents' talk, the people who lived next door (Neil and Cathy) acknowledged little cause for complaint. 'We talk to them' Neil said. 'Yeah....just a quick conversation' Cathy added, 'but we wouldn't socialise with them'. 'We're very different' Neil pointed out, 'but that's no discredit to them....and, at the end of the day, they keep themselves to themselves and that's no problem'. Fiona also had to admit that 'up to now I can't say anything because we haven't had trouble'.

However, there had been trouble with the previous tenants which had helped fuel the negative stereotype. 'We had an awful shindig one evening' Fiona explained, 'someone came back drunk and tried to push the door in....there was something like thirty police in the area, it was awful and we never did find out the reason for all the police though obviously there was something more than just a disturbance'. Neil gave his account of the incident:

We were lying in bed asleep and (I) woke up 'cos I could hear banging....and when I looked out the window there was this guy trying to smash his way in into next door..it wasn't the neighbour, but obviously he knew the neighbour. He was screaming the neighbour's name out and was running in, kicking the (back) door full pelt and trying to actually smash his way through..so..I was trying to open the window and tell him what for and obviously it was locked so I just tapped the window and he looked at me and I told him to go away in no uncertain terms...and off he went and the next thing I had him banging

again. I looked at the front and he was at the front door, this time trying to smash his way through the front door..I mean, seriously trying to smash his way in so...I rang the police.

The power of stereotyping is evident in the fact that the actions of the previous occupier were used to judge the current tenants. Nevertheless, as Bottoms and Wiles (1986) note, increased crime may be a consequence of policy decisions which place socially disadvantaged groups in communities. Worries about a developing crime problem from this incident, which was 'out of character for the area', might have influenced the reaction of some residents against the tenant family. Of course, another reaction may have been concern about property values. As Elliott (1994: 52) argues, 'simply maintaining social status, preventing downward movement is a matter of interest not just to individuals but to wider social groups' (see also Foster 1999). Fiona observed that if more houses could not sell and were let instead, other 'undesirable' families could move in with consequent impact on the exclusive reputation of the area.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the nature of the 'community' which existed in the suburb. Despite the appeal of the notion of 'community' based on solidarity and social cohesion, people led mainly an atomised and individualised existence through privatised lifestyles based on busy working and leisure routines. Their sense of 'community' derived less from sharing, materially or socially, and more from a shared identity based on similarity and homogeneity (Sennett 1971), and a fear of difference (Sibley 1995; Suttles 1972; Woodward 1997). The protection of identity was expressed as a desire for safety, since as Furedi (1997) notes, safety has become the fundamental value of late modernity.

The neighbourhood was what Suttles (1972) would categorise as 'defended'; characterised by physical, social and structural boundaries and fear of outside

intrusion. Boundaries enabled the establishment and maintenance of a group identity based on exclusiveness and the exclusion of difference, and the contrast of the 'purity' and tranquillity of the suburb with the danger and disorder of other urban areas reinforced that identity. This contrast was emphasised in attitudes to strangers who stereotypically did not belong to the area and the way people talked about crime in terms of 'travelling crime' (Girling et al 2000: 55): for example predatory and arising from the council estates in the town. The fear of difference may also be seen in terms of perceived threat to investment (Taylor 1996). As a result of these factors the socially and economically successful have become 'an extremely anxious and insecure social bloc' (Taylor 1996: 317) and it is the fear of crime which is the focus of chapter 5.

Associated with many aspects of fear, and particularly fear of crime, were young people. This was because youths were a powerful image of threat, not only because of their association with crime (Muncie 1987; 1999), but also their association with the moral decline of society (Pearson 1983). As Taylor (1996: 324) aptly states, 'the patterns of fear and anxiety in a suburban neighbourhood ...draw on powerful urban myths and folklore, which have a long and much more general, discursive history, and which we recognise may, in some instances, have a national and even trans-national (rather than local) character' (see Chaney 1997 for a similar view). Fear of crime also encompasses the fear of disempowerment which arises from loss of control, especially among people who are used to being in control of their lives, and youths are the embodiment of that threat. These issues form the theme of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

‘Hanging out down the local park’
The ‘problem’ of youths

Introduction

This chapter explores the role of youths in people's fears, particularly the image of youths as troublesome or dangerous and their association with crime (Muncie 1999). At the level of society in general youths reflect the 'wider 'risk profiles' of late modernity' (Girling et al 2000: 115 [see also Loader et al 1998]), in which more general anxieties about social change are expressed in discourses about the current state of the country as compared with an earlier 'golden age of order and security' characterised by harmony, peace and stability (Pearson 1983: 7).

In such discourses, and in political and media debates, youths are demonised (Cohen 1973; Muncie 1999) and depicted as representative of the moral decline of society (Girling et al 2000; Pearson 1983). This stereotypical association of youths with the state of society no doubt heightens intolerant attitudes to youth behaviour, irrespective of its nature. However, intolerance of youths' also reflects the fear of otherness which I outlined in chapter 3. This fear is expressed in protectionist attitudes relating on the one hand to the 'psychic investment brought to the idea of a private life by residents who....have bought into a particular type of suburban street' (Taylor 1995: 270), and on the other the 'suburbanite search for personal economic safety and neighbourhood security' (Taylor 1996: 321). The threatening image of youths as dangerous, lacking respect for authority and 'generally dismissive of anything adult' (Muncie 1999: 8) is an intrusion on these suburban ideals and values.

In Uppenhall, fears of intrusion were exacerbated by the apparent anonymity of youths, or the fact that youths were often seen as strangers and therefore perceived to be 'not from around here'. Like 'travelling crime' (Girling et al 2000: 102) perpetrated by 'them lot over there' (see chapter 3), troublesome youths were thought to originate in other areas, usually council estates, in the

town, becoming the subject of what Taylor (1996: 323) refers to as 'myths' which 'focus on fear of the encroachment and contamination of the suburbs by the inner city'. In this sense youths represent the 'violence, disorder and insecurity of the city' (Girling et al 2000: 115), from which suburban dwellers seek to distance themselves (Cross 1997; Silverstone 1997; Taylor 1995). This distancing was certainly evident in the way some Uppenhall residents were keen to stress the exclusiveness and physical distinction of the area from the town (see chapter 3). Because youths were perceived to have values which conflicted with those of local residents, and divergent views of moral right or wrong (Furedi 1997), their perceived incursion into the area threatened to morally corrupt 'innocent local kids', and their lack of 'respect for people or property' was a threat to the 'shelter of tranquillity, order and stability' in which people had actively sought to invest 'so much economic and emotional capital' (Girling et al 2000: 115).

I also argue that people's fears of youth nuisance and crime related to feelings of disempowerment. The residents of Uppenhall were a social group used to being in control of their lives and destinies and yet they felt unable to control the actions of youths in the locality, either individually or as a community. In addition, they perceived a failure of the formal control agencies, such as the police, to control youths. These fears link to wider concerns about policing (McConville and Shepherd 1992; Reiner 1997; Reiner and Cross 1991; Skogan 1996) which are articulated in Taylor's (1996: 326) comments about crime and 'the widespread recognition, particularly on the part of the suburban middle class, that the publicly-funded police forces are losing the war'.

Fears of disempowerment were also spatially rooted since, as Massey (1998) points out, power relations invariably have a spatial dimension. Other studies have shown the tensions which can arise from the use of a particular space by

different groups of people (eg. Merry 1981), especially 'young people making noisy use of a small number of 'symbolic locations' in public space' (Taylor 1995: 267). I explore the spatial embodiment of power and fear by focusing on a local 'problem' which centred on a children's play area in Willow Close where groups of youths gathered on summer evenings. My account highlights the conflicting identities of youths and local residents and how they were 'constructed and contested' within that particular space (Dwyer 1998: 50). I focus on the contrasting experiences of two people who lived on opposite sides of the play area and how their life histories might help to explain their different perceptions of the situation. Their accounts are individual and I do not seek to generalise from them but merely highlight the socio-spatial issues which arose in the particular context of the play area. Nevertheless, as I hope becomes clear, their accounts resonate with many of the wider issues associated with inter-generational conflicts (Girling et al 2000) and suburban fears.

The 'demonisation' of youth

'Teenaphobia has reached an all time high' claimed an American newspaper in 1995 (Lucas 1998: 145). This general reaction to youths sums up attitudes to youths in Uppenhall and also reflects the global nature of the 'demonisation of youth' (Lucas 1998: 145), that 'space in between' childhood and adulthood which is perceived as both stereotypically dangerous and in danger (Oswell 1998: 38). Yet the connection between young people and crime is not new (France and Wiles 1998). In fact, the history of youth as a folk-devil (Cohen 1973) can be traced back to the industrial era and beyond (Oswell 1998; Pearson 1983). Pearson, for instance, in his account of public fears about street crime and violence, describes the cyclical nature of the political and media focus on youth as a threat to social and moral order. He suggests that:

Nowadays the mid-1950s rock craze seems to provoke nothing more than a nostalgic chuckle, and when the original Teds are remembered at

all within the contemporary preoccupation with hooliganism it is as something quaint and remarkably innocent. Whereas it was common in their own time for Teddy Boys to be contrasted with a nostalgically remembered state of pre-existing harmony 'twenty years ago' or 'before the war', given the real horror which greeted their arrival we can perhaps only marvel at the way in which the nostalgic trick of amnesia can now work in the Teds' favour.
(Pearson 1983: 23)

This 'total amnesia for the recent past' (Pearson 1983: 24) was evident in these statements from older respondents in Uppenhall. As Simon argued, 'the trouble is there's....no respect for property, persons or anything today like there was in our younger days, no respect at all'. Martin highlighted a growing trend towards more violence among the young. 'When I was a kid' he said,

we didn't seem to be as vindictive, we didn't seem to have such nasty minds as the kids of today. Maybe we were wrong, maybe if we went back whatever number of years it is...forty years maybe, we would be just as bad, but....we don't remember it that way. I know the trouble I got into, it's nothing like the aggravation....and I never gave anybody any aggravation, that I know.....and we had a lot less to do, we had nothing to do....back in those times....cinemas and a swimming pool.....or mixing with mates, having girlfriends, you know, usual things.

At one level these statements form broader narratives concerning anxieties about 'the way society is today' (Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 521). They signify concerns about change in society which may be grounded in economic, social and cultural, as well as moral, issues (Girling et al 2000; Loader et al 1998; Reiner and Cross 1991). For instance, in their study of middle-class anxieties in Macclesfield, Girling et al (2000) found that residents accounted for youth behaviour in various ways. One was to situate local problems involving 'disorderly youths' in terms that stretched beyond the boundaries of their local community, or indeed the town itself, such as reduced opportunities in the job market (Girling et al 2000: 89). Another was the way in which teenage attitudes and values reflect 'more diffuse and difficult to grasp mutations in the cultural and moral order (in fields such as education or the media for instance) that are felt to have impacted detrimentally on the dispositions of 'the youth of today''

(Girling et al 2000: 92). At another level the statements of my respondents signify concerns about the activities of young people who do not appear to embody the values of the 'community' (Elias and Scotson 1994).

The stereotypical association of youths with crime and disorder and subcultural and 'deviant' youth styles, by the media in particular (Cohen 1973; Muncie 1987; 1999; Pearson 1983), has created an image of youths as 'folk-devils' (Cohen 1973). This may explain intolerant attitudes towards young people that I observed in my research, despite the often seemingly innocuous nature of their activities. Frank, for example, described a 'problem' with 'children' hanging around in some allotments at the back of his neighbour's house in Coniston Close. 'When I say children' Frank pointed out 'I mean fifteen, sixteen year olds down there...not doing anything but smoking, that's as bad as it got'. 'But you don't know what they're getting into', he continued 'you don't know what they're up to basically and you become suspicious'. David and Karen also feared 'young kids...or teenagers...hanging around down the bottom' beyond their garden boundary in the corner of Coniston Close. 'We know that....youths do come down' Karen said. 'There's a little wooded area which is part of the school next door and, moreso in the summer, you can hear them talking and walking around...down the train line sometimes'.

Intolerance of youths in the area may be also explained by what Taylor (1996: 319) refers to as efforts towards 'the preservation of particular neighbourhoods or communities against threats to their present status'. Taylor (1996: 319) has in mind particularly what are commonly known as 'NIMBY movements ('Not in My Backyard')' which are known to be organised around the defence of the social or residential character of the neighbourhood. On the one hand Taylor argues that these types of 'social movement' are seen to be evidence of bourgeois self-interest and intolerance, such as the protection of property

values. However, on the other hand, quoting social theorists like Bauman, Taylor (1996: 320) argues that this view is too narrow and does not take account of the underlying issues which, are thought to form the 'central problem of our times - not so much issues of environment or 'risk', but rather the question of how citizens can deal with social difference and still live in an organised civil society'.

Notwithstanding the impact of rowdy youths on the image of the area, the effect on public perceptions of safety from youths congregating in certain 'symbolic locations' (Taylor 1995: 267) has been well documented. Youths gathering in public places, such as local shops and street corners (Shapland and Vagg 1988), make them highly visible and raise people's fears (Girling et al 2000; Loader et al 1998; Williams et al 1999). As Muncie (1999: 8) argues: 'images of dangerousness are arguably the most familiar public appearance of youth encapsulated in the threat and danger of the mob or gang'. These fears were expressed by many of my interviewees. 'If I see a crowd of youths' Fiona said 'I am aware to keep...my distance....and they do congregate at...(the) shops. I would cross over rather than walk where there are a lot of youths'. Colin expressed a similar sentiment: 'If....say a group of young men...were hanging about (in the street near my house) I would be concerned about them....there would be a....threat there'. 'Crowds of youths' made Sharon nervous. 'It's only with what you've read in the paper and what you've seen on the television' she said,

with drugs and everything you think it's not going to happen in our town but then you do hear about drugs in schools and you think well, there's only got to be somebody that's taking something like that who...they don't really know what they're doing so crowds of youths.....I'm not happy about walking past at any time. It's dreadful, isn't it?...when you sort of start thinking about it.

Rose felt that the apparent ubiquity of youths gave the impression they were 'taking over'. She argued 'they could go anywhere....these youths, (because)

they've got the whole power'. Yet Valentine et al (1998) suggest that because public space is produced as adult space, the streets, parks and other such places where youths congregate are the only autonomous places in which they can territorialise and exercise resistance to adult power, or escape the 'supervision of adult authority' (Girling et al 2000: 79 [see also Taylor 1995: 283]). As such any claim to power is made without real resources to gain power (Connell 1995) but the threat associated with youths endows them with greater power than they actually possess (Muncie 1999). Girling et al (2000: 96) argue that the threat created by youth autonomy from adult authority arises where the behaviour of the young is interpreted by adults in terms of 'unruliness, indiscipline and disrespect'. This leads to inter-generational conflicts, particularly where such behaviour is felt to disrupt the 'haven-like qualities' of the neighbourhood (Girling et al 2000: 97).

I want to explore the issues of power, vested interest and insecurity in relation to one area, Willow Close, which I observed during the fieldwork where 'problem' youths gathered in a play area. Girling et al (2000: 82) suggest that residents interpret the presence and behaviour of youths in contrasting ways and invest it with varying degrees of significance, based on their biographical relationship with the place in which they reside, 'and how it fits into their past, present and possible futures' (see also Loader et al 1998). Using the biographies of two residents, Bob and Norma, who lived either side of the play area, I shall focus on their different perceptions of the place and the 'problem' youths.

The play area

The play area was a triangle of council-owned open space sandwiched between private detached properties (see figure 6). On two sides it was abutted by the rear gardens of properties in Elm Close, Fir Tree Close and Poplar Drive, and

The Willow Close play area

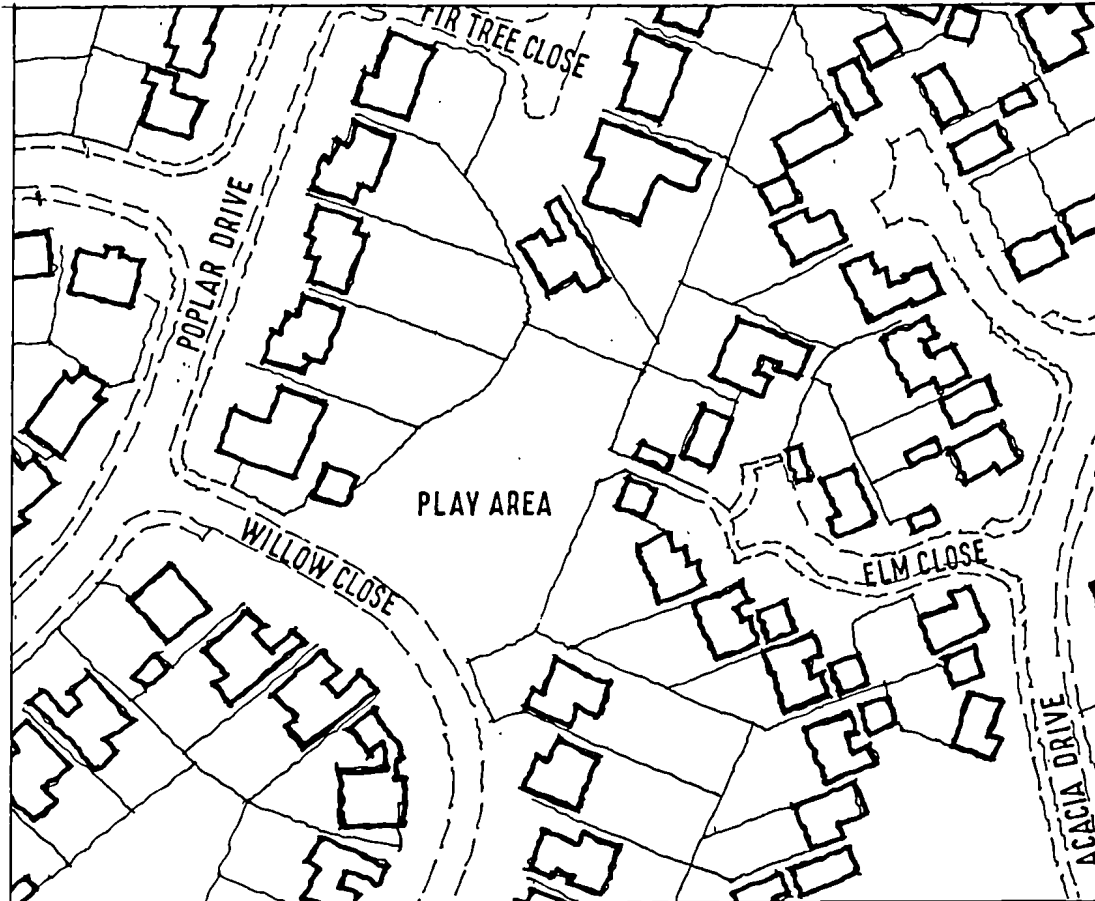


Figure 6

on the other it was overlooked by the frontages of a row of bungalows in Willow Close. In the corner away from the road was a concrete apron containing a few artefacts of play equipment, including swings and a slide. Halfway down one boundary, a narrow walkway, known locally as a 'jitty', which went between two houses, connected the play area to Elm Close and provided a pedestrian link between culs-de-sac. The remainder of the area was laid to grass, except for an area of shrubbery in the middle which had been strategically placed by the council to reinforce the message on the official sign which read 'no ball games'. The sign was a response to complaints from various residents about balls repeatedly entering their gardens.

The play area had become a gathering place for youths on summer evenings, causing concern among residents about rowdy behaviour, vandalism and drug use in what was otherwise a very quiet, 'off-the-beaten-track' location. In this sense the play area bore certain similarities to Stamford Park, which Taylor (1995) describes in his analysis of crime talk in suburban South Manchester. Stamford Park was a public park located on the boundary between Hale and Altrincham and was one of a number of 'key sites or symbolic locations' for youths in the locality (Taylor 1995: 267). Taylor notes how local parents became concerned about the 'nocturnal gatherings of young men' in the park, and how the noise they created disturbed the residents of 'the gentrified terraces which surrounded the park' (Taylor 1995: 268).

Local rumour and media reports about drug use claimed that drugs traffickers were coming from far-off conurbations, but these were unsubstantiated by the police, who instead found that it was mostly local youths who occupied the park. While Taylor acknowledges that fears may have in part derived from the physical nature of the park, being unlit at night and bounded by high hedges, his analysis also suggests that residents' anxieties relate to 'powerful

ideological themes' of respectability, and the 'serenity of the English suburb', together with 'the cultural capital which residents of these areas may feel accrues from owning property in such areas' (Taylor 1995: 270).

Contrary to the view that greater mobility removes the necessity for suburban youth gangs to inhabit territories (Korem 1994), the play area in Willow Close was one of several gathering places for youths in the locality. 'People hang around different parks' said one local teenager who frequented the play area during school holidays. 'There's a gang at Oak Tree park, there's a gang at Hightown rec(reation ground)....all places like that'. Youths hanging around generally relates to a lack of the type of facilities which teenagers are happy to use (Girling et al 2000). As another youth explained, 'there's no-where else to go....better than being at home'. Hanging around in certain locations, however, is a process by which 'youth cultures claim their own spaces' and are defensive and excluding in the process (Massey 1998: 128). Merry (1981), for example, in her study of 'Dovers Square', a modern housing development on the east coast of America, observed how the general use of a playground in the centre of the development ceased upon the arrival of a group of black youths, who used it as their social centre. Locals came to acknowledge the youths' territorial control over the playground and walked round rather than pass through.

Residents who lived near the play area in Willow Close thought that the advent of the older youths had displaced younger children who once played there. Linda, whose house in Elm Close backed on to the play area, used to watch the younger children from her upstairs windows. 'Very often you'd see forty or fifty of them' she said 'and they'd be just sitting in a circle...and they were having a great time, just sitting...doing nothing really, just talking or whatever and that seemed to just end, it wasn't a meeting place for the younger ones anymore when these youths moved in'. Of course, the residents may have

observed demographic change - the same children only older and therefore behaving differently - rather than displacement.

Norma, whose house adjoined the play area, felt that the council's decision to stop ball games had led to the unintended consequence of forcing younger children away leaving the space unused. She also felt it had to an extent taken the play area away from the community losing the informal controls associated with local users' territorial attachment to place (Newman 1973), and the hierarchy of control which stems from the use of space by a variety of users (Jacobs 1961; Hillier et al 1983). 'We always used to have long cricket matches and rounder matches' Norma recalled,

every summer's evening and if there's kids playing rounders, cricket or whatever there you're less likely to get older ones doing things that they didn't ought to be doing. But in trying to stop all...the kids, the sort of twelve, thirteen year olds who are innocently playing there....then you're letting the other ones have some secret place to meet so I think in a way...that....in stopping them you're creating more of a problem' because I don't think people want to sniff glue or....take drugs or whatever if there's a game of cricket, football or rounders for younger kids....they won't want them looking at them.

However, once the older youths had moved in 'the way in which group images and place images combine to create landscapes of exclusion' (Sibley 1995: 14) had another displacement effect. Youths gathering in numbers in the unlit play area at night resulted in other users, particularly women, staying away. Linda said 'I wouldn't go down that jitty....(or) through that park (at night) because it's pitch black', echoing the gendered nature of fear of dark places (Painter 1991; Taylor 1995), which may be also 'very much linked to a generalized concern about young men's colonization of public places' (Taylor 1995: 269). Like graffiti in urban areas, litter and broken glass in the play area were 'a clear indicator of social disorder (Lucas 1998: 148 [see also Skogan 1990; Wilson and Kelling 1982]), making the place dangerous for children and unseemly for their parents. 'It's pretty well vandalised round there' Martin observed. 'It's not

all that safe....there's usually a whole load of glass and all the rest of it....I haven't used it now for a long time....we tend to go off to other (play areas)'.

'Not from this community'

The fears associated with youths congregating were fears of intrusion, since the youths were mainly perceived to be "outsiders" to the local community' (Taylor 1996: 322). Having behaviour which did not conform to the residents' ideas of appropriate conduct, such as making noise which disturbed the peace and tranquillity of the area, the youths certainly did not fit into 'the established order' of the community (Elias and Scotson 1994: 113). Linda noted that while she was able to identify local children among the groups that gathered in the play area, it was always strangers who were the ringleaders and their influence threatened to corrupt the morals of the local children. 'Our children see it from the bedroom window' she said,

you can't help but see it. I think what's frightening is some of these kids (are local), we know who they are, we know how old they are. Some of them are not (local) and the ringleaders are not....(but) it is not pleasant to see a fourteen year old....paralytic, up the park, out of control. She stood next to the slide one day and took all her clothes off.....absolutely paralytic, she was fourteen at the time, it was broad daylight. (One) person started to come up there and....our kids come back from school and say "oh, he's just come out of prison, he's done this, he's done that...." and he's up there every day and, of course, all these youngsters think he's great. Their parents don't know...what's going on and he's quite a hero. I don't know whether he's dealing drugs or what he's doing but all these kids are going up there to meet him.

The quiet location of the play area, situated amidst culs-de-sac some distance from the main roads, did not seem to be the sort of place that would attract 'outsiders', particularly those involved in crime. Offenders tend to operate in places which they know from habitual use (Brantingham and Brantingham 1984; 1991) and affluent suburban areas are often not targeted by offenders for certain crimes because cul-de-sac layouts reduce the likelihood of them

becoming known to offenders (Rengert and Wasilchick 1985). Yet Norma, who lived adjacent to the play area, discovered that two members of the group gathering in the play area on one occasion were not local. She said 'one was from (a village out of town) and one was from Colliers End, which is some distance away'. Linda and Paul, whose house backed on to the play area, concluded that the youths were 'not local people' because they had 'started to come in cars'.

It is likely that many of the youths were local but just not recognised by residents in the area because of limited social ties and networks which often meant that other local people were strangers. People's restricted view of the community reflected their perceptions of what was local. For instance, Martin said 'none of (the youths) seem to live in the area....they live the other side of Milton Road or....up near (the council estate)', but these places were part of Uppenhall. Bob claimed 'they're not from this community....the last time I caught one in the tree....I says "where are you from?" and he says (a place) that's half a mile away'. Sarah and Vicky, both teenagers, lived locally (in the next street) and frequented the play area. They acknowledged that youths came from 'all over' Minington because of wide and diverse social networks. 'Hanging around the local park' Sarah pointed out '(means) you just hear about people and....you're in town and they're with their friends and you're with your friends and everybody really meets everybody else....so we know loads of people'. But the fact that the park had become a 'symbolic location' (Taylor 1995: 267), or 'rallying point' (Elias and Scotson 1994: 112), for youths attracted youngsters from far and wide into areas they would otherwise be unlikely to venture.

Vested interests

During the fieldwork I attended a meeting arranged by the community beat police officer in which residents aired their views to local councillors and a local authority representative on the 'problem' of the play area and how it might be solved. Various suggestions were put forward, one being to channel the youths' energies in other directions, such as ice skating, thus controlling the nature and place of their activities (Massey 1998) according to middle-class suburban values. Another suggestion was to fence off the play area and allow access only to local residents, a strategy to 'protect and defend' their own interests and 'to dominate, and to control and define others' (Massey 1998: 126-127). This privatisation of public space could be seen also as a strategy to 'squeeze undesirable 'others' out' (Valentine et al 1998: 7).

If spatial structures can be seen as embodiments of power relations (Sibley 1995; Massey 1998) then the capacity to change the environment is an expression of power (Sibley 1995). But part of the process of change might also be seen as part of a process of 'purification' (Sennett 1971; Sibley 1995, chapter 5). As Sibley notes the characteristic of purification is the registering (and fear) of difference, and the desire to exclude, or expel, a source of threat by the 'erection of strong boundaries' (Sibley 1995: 78 [see also Massey 1994]). One resident, Bob, offered the solution of selling the play area off to a developer to build houses, thus strongly classifying the space in the manner of the 'clearly bounded and homogeneous units' (Sibley 1995: 80) which all of the houses on the estate represented.

Nevertheless, there were conflicting views among the residents as to how much change was appropriate, highlighting Foster's (1999: 2) contention that the affluent 'powerful' are often more divided than they superficially appear. Some residents did not want to see the play area closed and sold off because they had

vested interests in keeping it open. 'I'm happier that the play area is there than if it wasn't there' Norma said, 'I think it has been more use than detriment...but that's because I've got children perhaps'. Muriel, whose house in Elm Close backed on to the play area, said 'I wouldn't like to see it go as an open space'. One of her concerns about the land being built on was her loss of privacy. 'I must admit that I like the fact that I (am not) overlooked at the back' Muriel said. 'I have never lived in a house where I've had somebody able to look into my bedroom window'. But, like Norma, she also had occasion to use the play area. It afforded her pedestrian access to a friend who lived in Willow Close. 'She's an Inner Wheeler like me' Muriel continued 'and she is partially sighted. In fact she's just been registered blind and, of course, I try to help her as much as I can and...so....I pop across this play area....and...ask her if she's all right'.

'Conflicting communities'

The spatial relationship of the play area to the properties surrounding it seemed to have some bearing on the residents' attitudes to and perceptions of the youth gatherings. Massey (1994) argues that space has multiple identities, which vary according to the experience of the place by each individual and so space can be a source of richness or a source of conflict or both. Thus the play area may be seen as a place where 'numerous different, and frequently conflicting, communities intersected' (Massey 1994: 164). Massey (1994: 147-152) also suggests that space has elements of order and chaos, but the longing for order and coherence, rather than chaos, is often seen as a sign of geographical fragmentation which results in defensive, reactionary responses, such as antagonism to 'outsiders' and the formation of boundaries between 'us' and 'them'.

The respondents who saw the play area as a source of conflict, such as Bob and his wife, Martin, and Jonathan and Sandy, all lived in properties which faced

away from the play area. They abutted it but were separated from it by high boundary fences or dense screens of trees. As such the space was not integrated into their daily lives in any meaningful way and the activities taking place at night would have appeared to them much like Taylor's (1995) description of the way Stamford Park appeared to residents living nearby:

The interior of Stamford Park is invisible, even in daylight, because of a perimeter hedge some seven to eight feet in height surrounding two sides of the park, which has the visual effect at night of a fortified, cavernous 'black hole', unrelieved by any kind of artificial lighting. The presence of this dark space, with noise emanating from its central core, will certainly not have reassured the residents of the surrounding Georgian terraces, especially during the winter months, particularly on the road opposite the perimeter hedges.
(Taylor 1995: 269)

These respondents' defence of the play area was to protect their own identities: their emotional and material investment (Girling et al 2000; Loader et al 1998), rather than out of any sense that the space belonged to them. Norma's property on the other hand fronted on to the play area. For her and other residents in Willow Close it formed a 'source of richness' (Massey 1994: 153) by being an integral part of the community of Willow Close. Her children played with neighbours' children there and the play area became a focus of social interaction, as Norma explained:

My son was getting towards the toddler age....the sort of age when....it was appropriate to take him over there and kick the ball round with him and play on the swings (and), because I was always out with (him) walking up and sort of kicking the ball around, (I) used to spend ages talking out there (to neighbours)....and, of course,several of the other houses have children a similar age....and so I think that helped with the friendliness and....they used to come down to the play area a lot.

The spatial arrangement of this micro-context, for instance the ambiguity of the relationship of the play area to both its immediate surroundings and wider context, illustrates how poorly integrated spaces can adversely influence people's attachment to place and each other as a community. Hillier and Hanson (1984) emphasise this point in their argument that space has a social

logic just as society has a certain spatial logic. Buildings and the spaces they create, according to Hillier and Hanson, are a form of social ordering, 'that through its ordering of space the man-made (sic) physical world is already a social behaviour' (1984: 9). Enclaves are therefore the built realisation of exclusive social attitudes, and yet reinforce those attitudes. A more community-oriented solution might have been to face the surrounding houses towards the play area, giving all residents an opportunity to identify with the space positively, as Norma and her neighbours appeared to do, and generating informal social control.

Other factors, such as gender, personality and concerns which arise from individual life-courses, will also have impacted on the different ways in which people related to the play area, and reacted to its use. In order to explore these issues in greater depth I want to focus on two detailed accounts (Norma and Bob) and the different perceptions of the youths' activities they highlighted.

The play area became a source of nuisance for Bob after he retired and began to spend more time at home. 'October '91 was when I really took residence in this place' he explained:

Well, of course, that's when things started to happen out there (in the play area) and it was simple things like footballs coming in....and then you start with all the litter, you start with the missiles being thrown, condoms, silk satin knickers thrown in....and general nuisance value. We've no privacy, they always used to be in these trees that belong to the council, they were always on the fence and that was my first introduction to it.

Norma had also experienced nuisance from the youths, such as missiles thrown at her house, but reacted in a different way. While Bob saw it as a continuous, intransigent problem that had dominated his life for over a decade, which he felt the formal agencies of control were powerless to control, Norma saw it as an insignificant and intermittent issue which the police or local authority

security patrols usually sorted out. 'It has, over the years that the play area has been there, perhaps happened three or four times' Norma said,

(the play area) has become the fashionable meeting place for older children and then they get moved on and they go back to the Uppenhall shops or the Oak Tree Shops or the Hightown cemetery or wherever they are now. Mostly it has been whoever is the current....community policeman....who has increased his or her presence and the council, I assume they still have, they certainly used to have security patrols who would come up a couple of evenings and it...goes away again as it has done this time.

However, personal biographies help shape attitudes, perceptions and fears (Goodey 1997; Hollway and Jefferson 1997; 2000; Lupton and Tulloch 1999) and therefore the following section explores Bob and Norma's 'biographical relationship.....to the place they reside in (and) how it fits into their past, present and possible futures' (Girling et al 2000: 82).

Hard graft

Bob was a well-built man in his early sixties who was outspoken and opinionated, particularly with regard to the play area. His wife, Mary, by contrast, was a mild-mannered, quietly spoken woman of few words. Both had come from a working-class background in the northeast of England. 'Everybody was on the same poverty level', Bob said,

nobody could be a snob....other than business people. I didn't wear shoes until I was sixteen year old, they were always boots and I bought me own first pair of shoes. I used to buy me own toothpaste, me mother didn't buy it. I got a guinea when I went (out to work) and I got five bob back (after paying for his keep) and that went on until I was twenty year old and I left home. We got married on five pound ten.

'Your social life was what you made yourself', Bob continued. 'I used to say to me dad "Dad, I want to go to the pictures, give us a tanner". He says "but there's pictures on the wall son", but I says "I want to go to the movies". He says "well swing the buggers"'.

In the context of poverty and hardship Bob learned to be an entrepreneur. 'My pocket money was the pop bottles that were returnable and deposited...two pence. I used to get them on Monday as my weekly pocket money but I had to work for it....all (the) chores. I used to run messages for everybody and they used to say "Bob, get down to the chemist two mile away or go down to the doctors or get up the store". That was my life'. Bob was not afraid of 'hard graft', or fighting for his share of what little there was to go round, as he explained:

I've done anything for money and I say anything. (I've) worked since I was (able) to walk. You had your chores like chopping the sticks, getting the coal in...I used to put fifteen hundredweight loads of coal in for sixpence and you were fighting other people to get that privilege and it wasn't a case of throwing it.....it was two two-gallon pails, throwing it in ...getting all the splints out, there was always stone because it was (second grade) coal, that was your concession to your family, and then sweeping up....sixpence. I was butcher boy, I was paper boy, I was on the milk round, I was on the store cart, and I used to do that just to ride the horse down from the store to the field, and I worked at the farm.

After joining the mining industry Bob and his wife moved to Minington to escape the industry's decline in the northeast. They originally settled in a small property in a deprived area on the east side of the town but Bob eventually left mining and found work abroad, first in south-east Asia and subsequently in the Middle East. On their return to Minington Bob was able to afford their 'dream home', a bungalow in Fir Tree Close, and a comfortable and peaceful retirement in relative luxury.

Part of the community?

Unlike Bob, whose strong work ethic (Thorns 1972) and desire to earn money, took him from his working-class roots to a position in middle-class suburbia, Norma was born and raised locally (her mother still lived nearby in Uppenhall). While Bob had achieved a material investment in the area, Norma was more socially embedded in the local community. She and her husband had bought the

plot in Willow Close and, like many of their neighbours, they had designed and built their own house, providing not only a material investment, but also a common identity (self-builders) with their neighbours. 'I know almost everyone along here on Christian name terms', Norma said, 'and.....certainly on this side of the road we are the original occupiers, some of whom were self-builders like ourselves so there's quite a lot of camaraderie between (all of us)'. In addition, Norma was well connected to local social and business networks as she described:

I run (a local) symphony orchestra...and so I get involved....in the arts and music or theatre community because that's where most of my friends and contacts are. I also work in Minington, I'm a Chartered Accountant. I meet a lot of business people so I'm very much involved with the business community of Minington. It tends to be small businesses (rather than) international businesses, so I always tend to support those....going out into the wider community.

Norma's connections within local society were based on an inter-dependence, where her own efforts were 'counterbalanced by reaping rewards' (Komiya 1999: 373). 'I do try and use the local shops' she pointed out,

I've always supported the local businesses and the local post office and.....as I say, I run an orchestra and we tend to do things at the local church and I know various people who have businesses and contacts in this small area who I try and get to flog tickets and so on. I would always go to the Spa at Uppenhall for someone to put posters up and that sort of thing and various shops in Hightown.....that's using it for my own ends but....maybe that's what it's all about....it's sort of all trying to help each other.

According to Komiya (1999: 373) it is the 'fruits of a full commitment to 'localised relations organised in terms of place'' which produce what Giddens (1990: 92) refers to as 'ontological security'. Thus it may be argued that Norma's social investment in the area and the mutually supportive networks that have arisen from this provided her with ontological security.

Bob had less social investment in the area. 'With my background' he said 'I can live in a tent, and my house is where me feet are. I want to go back to the

northeast....me heartstrings pull us back there'. His wife, Mary, did not. She felt more settled in the area because two of their sons and families lived locally. However, the high material and emotional investment in the property, which Bob had 'worked damned hard to get....and it took...fifty years', was the main reason for him to stay. It also reinforced his sense of threat to their investment that the youths in the play area represented. Thus, he talked about the property more in terms of its commodity value on the housing market than a home in which to spend his retirement. 'We're trapped and it's a blight on our lives and a blight on our property' Bob said,

we've spent a fortune....our biggest asset is here. Now, to follow on from that, if I sell this property, I must declare that I have complained about that play area and the reason for that is...the bad neighbour syndrome...if the person that buys it is not aware of (the problem) and....eventually finds out that he has this problem, he can sue me if he then decides to sell on and cannot accumulate the money that he paid for it. If it's at a loss...I have to compensate him for his loss and that's law.

Bob's concern about the impact of the youths' activities on his investment mirrors the worries of residents in Foster's (1999) study of Docklands about a proposal to site the London Arena near their homes. As Foster notes, some residents were reluctant to complain because they felt the bad publicity would have a detrimental effect on property values. Ironically, Bob's sense of entrapment was as much the result of his own actions and the fact that he had complained about the play area, as it was the actions of the youths.

'Kids throwing stones'

The similarity in Bob and Norma's experiences of reprisals underlines the differential impact the youths had on their quality of life. Angry confrontations frequently took place in which Bob would go round to the play area and verbally 'chastise' the youths for making a noise or throwing missiles, but this only attracted greater victimization. 'You get nothing but abuse when you

challenge them or chastise them' Bob pointed out, 'and then it only gets worse because they take it out (on) you even more, you get more rocks coming over'. But the nature of reprisals, he felt, was getting more serious. 'It's getting worse' he explained:

I cannot go into my garden at any time after six-o'clock and feel safe because you don't know when you're getting bombarded with any type of missile. You've seen the lock and chain that came over after I reported it to the police. There's a pair of pointy nosed pliers in there and also a bottle opener with a screw end...now those alone, if they'd hit anybody they could have killed them. That's apart from the stones that come in, the coins. Me sister came down here on a visit, she was in the bedroom, she come running out, she says "ooh, your central heating's exploding", I says "it isn't, it's the kids throwing stones". Now we get that along with the noise. I can sit on my settee, look at the television which is only three yards away and....I've gotta turn the sound up....we can't even open the windows.

Norma and her husband had also confronted children whom they felt were engaging in offensive or dangerous behaviour. 'I have gone out on odd occasions' Norma said 'when there's been a lot of bad language, when there's been people throwing bottles, or when there's been kids obviously doing things that were dangerous to other children (and) mostly...they have shut up and mended their ways'. However, Norma admitted that she had suffered some reprisals as a consequence of her actions. 'There was one occasion....when there was bitch put in quite big letters across my brick wall. I can't remember what they wrote it with but it was there for some time'. Some reprisals had been as severe as those suffered by Bob and his wife. 'An airgun pellet had obviously been fired at one of the windows upstairs' Norma said. 'There was a pellet hole in the outer skin of the glass and I think there was an egg or something thrown against the front wall at one time'.

'A frightening guy'

Bob felt unable to control the situation. Throughout his working life he had been used to positions of power and control. 'When somebody says to me "I've

got a problem, I’m giving it to you”, I solve it. If it’s within my realm, I’ll solve it’. Despite the fact that he saw himself as ‘easy-going....I like to get on with people’, Bob also admitted ‘I can be a bugger if I want to’. This meant that he was not afraid of confrontation, as a dispute with his neighbour revealed: ‘The previous neighbour tried to sell his house to the health authority and tried to break the deed covenant to make it a care in the community home’ Bob explained.

We actually went to court over that (but) once the health authority were aware of (the legal action) (it) pulled out of the sale which created bad blood between (the neighbour) and me. That developed into a border dispute (because) the builder actually integrated two accesses where there should have been a dividing lawn between us and....I use part of his property...it’s his in deed but it’s mine in possession. I’ve gone through all the solicitors, etc, etc and....that created a lot of bad blood because he was forever moving my bin from its position, I was putting it out, he was trespassing on my land, he was cutting me grass, anything to annoy.....but nothing I couldn’t handle in that respect....one or two verbals and it could have got to fisticuffs many a time but c’est la vie, he’s gone and....out of it but that’s your neighbours...you can’t pick your neighbours, it doesn’t matter how much you pay for a house.

Bob’s actions depended on having money to enable him to take control, but money did not enable him to solve the problem in the play area. ‘You’re dealing with youths that you’ve got no control of’ he said, a situation which differed greatly from his own experience as a youth. In Bob’s childhood strong discipline, summary justice, and physical reprimand were common-place. It was fear of physical retribution which encouraged respect for others and their property, as he pointed out:

In our childhood.....in our community, the (local) police(man) lived straight opposite the school....and the police station was in his house. Now, if we went into the park and.....the park-keeper chastised us for any misdemeanour, and I mean it might have been anything.....climbing on the fence of the football field, he’d say “get out”. The first thing he’d do, he’d tell (the local policeman)....(who) would come round there, and he was a frightening guy cos he was about six foot three, had a duelling scar and he was like out of the guards and he always carried his cape. He’d say “come here....(the park-keeper) has just reported you....for climbing on the fence. You know you’re not to do that”....whop and he

says "now I'm gonna tell your father and you've got it again when you get home". That was it, finished, end of story....cruel but effective....and that's how we grew up.

As the extract above illustrates physical retribution was carried out by 'powerful others' (Rotter 1966, in Rotter 1975: 57), such as the local police officer, for whom Bob had the utmost respect. Bob's current frustration was therefore reinforced by the apparent inability of the police and the local authority to take control. 'Their hands are tied' Bob's wife said of the police. 'They can't even get a hold of them these days, can they? It must be frustrating for them, you know, when they're having to back off'.

Nevertheless Bob had explored all avenues to try and gain some support. 'I've gone through the whole system', he said, 'first the councillors of this ward, the first one I spoke to was in July '85. I gave him all the details....he disappeared, I never saw him again. Every month I went to the surgery. The only one I really had contact with, he came down here, he saw the situation but he was about as much good as a back pocket in a pair of underpants'. Bob outlined the response after following the 'council procedures' of calling the local authority security out:

'They come in, they say "behave boys", walk away and then they come round and they say "well, there's nothing we can do about it". They said "report to the police". The response time when I've complained to the police has always been approximately four and a half hours and by that time...the people have gone home'.

Bob had also tried to elicit support from other local residents. 'They were supportive in as much as they'll pat you on the back and they'll say "get on with it", but they'll not go with you, there's none of them gone to the council meetings. I've reported back to them and I see a dwindling interest'. This, he felt, was because 'they don't know what we've got to put up with' rather than the possibility that they, like Norma, perceived the situation as less of a

problem. 'The only guy that knows that' Bob added 'is (Jonathan) because he's gone out like me and challenged them'.

'Gonna get bottled'

Confrontation with the youths gave rise to the possibility of receiving physical harm. Often the younger youths appeared much older because of their size. 'In your mind you don't know if he's fifteen or he's twelve' Bob recalled, 'but....he's that big he must be fifteen. Out there you've got kids of all different sizes so you assume they're all different ages but if you pick on the big one you say "well, he looks eighteen year old", he says "I'm only fourteen" and that's a fact'. The size of the youths and the numbers congregating were intimidating. 'I was a bit apprehensive the last time I went round' Bob admitted,

but I didn't realise 'til I got there that I was in a frame of anger because I not only had them throwing stones, they were denying it and when I got there the ringleader was sitting on the back of the chair with his legs astride and it was only when I got there that I noticed that he had a bottle of hooch, whatever it was, wine or beer and there was five of them and I thought well, if I antagonise these I'm gonna get bottled and so I made a discreet exit and then phoned the police.

The encounter could have been a challenge to Bob's masculinity since he had grown up in a culture based on hegemonic masculinity (Goodey 1997), where the admission of fear is akin to weakness. 'To step outside the realms of acceptable masculinity is to endanger oneself as an atypical male' (Goodey 1997: 406). But Bob was also afraid of his own actions resulting from his frame of mind. He felt frustrated and angry, as well as powerless, exactly the feelings normally associated with conditions of poverty and inequality (Valentine et al 1998). 'I've got a very low tolerance level, I'm a very bad tempered man but that's because of my background' he said, 'struggling through life and I expect respect because I respect everybody and I expect the same back, that's the way we were brought up'. But the same background that taught him respect also taught him that respect is earned through physical

violence. Thus Bob’s solution for dealing with the youths ‘would be to walk in there with a base(ball) bat and give them a good wallop....and say “piss off, I don’t want to see you again”’.

The anger and intolerance of Bob’s confrontations had no doubt exacerbated the victimization that he suffered from the youths. As Norma pointed out, Bob’s tendency for angry confrontation had earned him a reputation among the children in the area. ‘I had heard about (Bob) from the children’ Norma said, ‘because he must have shouted at them on occasions’. She felt that it was his manner rather than the fact that he had complained to the youths which led to him being their target, although gender may have played a part. ‘I have been out many times’ she said,

that’s no exaggeration, I have been out and remonstrated but I think you’ve got to go about it in the right way. I think.....his attitude at (the residents’ meeting) seem(ed) quite antagonistic right from the start. He probably goes out there ready to do battle and you feel like saying to him “well, didn’t you ever play football as a....kid and knock a ball against someone’s window?”. I’m almost sure he played football in the street.

Norma’s statement highlighted an incident in Bob’s youthful past concerning playing football in the street, which seemed to have a lasting impression on him. The severity with which he was dealt with for kicking a ball in the street appeared to him to be in marked contrast to what he saw as the impunity of the youths’ actions in the play area. Of course, this reflects back to what Pearson (1983: 24) refers to as ‘amnesia’ among the older generations. Bob’s perception of the triviality of his actions as a young man might reflect the way in which the youths in the play area viewed their own actions. ‘Football was my life’ Bob explained:

This particular day I came home, had me lunch and I called for a colleague of mine who worked at the same place. There was a yard between the houses, his brother and a mate were playing football, the ball was kicked out into the street, we picked up our bags to leave and

shot the ball two or three times to get it through the gate to give it 'em back. The policeman walked round the end of the street, he called us across and he says "I'm charging you with playing football in the street". We were taken to court and, of course, the magistrate dismissed (the charge) on the grounds that first it wasn't an organised game and secondly, it was only a tennis ball. That's my crime of the century. Now, if I can be subject to a stupid idiotic charge like that and yet you have these yobboes behaving the way they are and we've got no way of.....stopping them.....there's got to be something sadly wrong with society and it isn't the society as such, it's authority within society.

Conclusion

In wider society youths are a threat because they are associated with crime and the moral decline of society and they represent the failure of institutions in society, such as the family and law and order (Girling et al 2000; Loader et al 1998). In addition, youths become a source of concern to residents who live near places 'under youthful occupancy' (Taylor 1995: 271), such as the play area, when they are perceived as 'outsiders' or 'not belonging' to the neighbourhood. Youth actions of nuisance, disruption and damage to property ideologically oppose cultural values expressed in the 'peace and tranquillity' of the suburb, and threaten material and emotional investment (Girling et al 2000).

As my discussion of the play area showed, fears of youths related to residents' social and spatial relationship with the places they identified with, moved around in and lived in. Despite claims that 'locale' is losing its meaning in late modernity (eg. Giddens 1991a), youth problems, as indeed crime, are invariably located in 'place' as 'private troubles' (Mills 1959, quoted in Taylor et al 1996: xv) which relate not only to the anxieties, but also the aspirations, of the people who reside there (Taylor et al 1996). Fear of youths also relates to deeper and more diffuse insecurities arising from individual life histories. As I argue in the next chapter this complex interrelationship of factors impacts on fear of crime.

Chapter 5

Frightening place, dangerous world
Fear of crime

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss high levels of fear of crime in a context of relatively low risk focusing on two important questions: what do people mean when they talk of being afraid; and why do people suffer fear of crime when they are less likely to be victimised? Much of the literature on fear of crime fails to provide satisfactory answers to these questions since fear of crime has been conceptually underdeveloped (Farrall and Ditton 1999; Sparks 1992) with much work on fear of crime being carried out at a descriptive and empirical level (Hollway and Jefferson 1997). In addition, defining fear of crime is problematic because, although it is used to generalize a range of emotions of different intensities, people use a variety of ways to express their feelings of concern (Williams et al 1999). Despite these problems fear of crime has become a predominant indicator of how pervasive the problem of crime is and the extent to which the public is concerned about crime (Mirrlees-Black *et al* 1996).

Fear of crime is ‘an emotional reaction of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime’ (Ferraro 1995: xiii). The symbolic attachment to fear provides a more meaningful approach to understanding fear of crime than simply making a judgement as to whether or not fear is rational (Sparks 1992; Lupton and Tulloch 1999). In the low crime context of Uppenhall the fears expressed by people living there seemed irrational on face value. However, to dismiss their fears in this way not only reduces the complexities of their fears, but also sets my ‘objective’ judgement against their lived realities (Lupton and Tulloch 1999). Furthermore, recent research highlights the greater insight into people’s fears which can be gained by examining the ‘cultural and symbolic representations, myths, narratives and meanings that are integral to everyday experience’, that is focusing on the issues that matter to people themselves (Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 510).

Hollway and Jefferson (1997: 256) are also critical of the characterisation of fear based on rationality. They suggest that 'the entire....debate about fear of crime in Britain is driven by the relationship between risk (of victimization) and fear' (Hollway and Jefferson 1997: 256). They argue that the framing of questions in crime surveys such as 'how safe do you feel walking alone in this area after dark?' assumes a narrow definition of fear in which evidence of low risk makes fear of crime irrational. This narrow definition also ignores the wider emotional responses, such as anger and frustration, that crime evokes (Farrall and Ditton 1999). Hollway and Jefferson's own approach to theorizing fear is context driven. On the one hand, they situate fears arising from 'macro' concerns, such as neighbourhood crime rates and incivilities, in the context of 'a changing, historical, socio-political formation in which questions of order and control are central' and, on the other they 'explore the relationship between discourses of fear and individual biographies' (Hollway and Jefferson 1997: 257).

Biography is an important element in fear because, as Goodey (1997: 405) argues, it represents the individual but in 'the wider context of lifecourse concerns'. Biography describes the diversity of experience and meaning attached to fear (and fearlessness) at both macro and micro levels, in other words, at the level of individual daily encounters and the meanings assigned to those encounters in social history (Goodey 1997). Goodey discusses the relevance of biographical accounts of fear and fearlessness in relation to men. She argues for example that men's experience of fear, or their willingness to admit fear, is not merely an issue of gender, but also relates to 'other signifiers of oppression; namely class, race, age and sexuality' (Goodey 1997: 403). The same can, of course, be said about women's fears which are claimed to arise from early socialization about the danger of strangers (Goodey 1994) and then

become part of a life-time of negotiating danger for women (Stanko 1990; 1995).

In this chapter I examine the deeper seated relationships between people's life histories, the broader spatial and cultural context of their suburban existence and the specificity of their fears. The chapter will focus on two strongly linked themes: the validity of interpreting fear of crime as rational or irrational in the way large scale quantitative surveys have tended to do (Lupton and Tulloch 1999). I argue that to a certain extent fears arise from a 'spill-over' effect of national and local crime from high crime areas due to media reporting of crime, and to 'scare stories' from local gossip networks which magnify local incidents into a crime wave. I also suggest that some fear of crime may be the result of other, deeper anxieties, such as health worries, bereavement or fear of dying which may be projected on to crime and expressed as fear of crime (see for instance Hollway and Jefferson 1997; Lupton and Tulloch 1999; Mawby and Gill 1987; Maxfield 1987). Deeper anxieties may also arise from ontological insecurity resulting from the difficulties of making sense of the world in the process of rapid change in late modernity (Giddens 1991a), dealing with risk in an ever increasing risk-averse society (Beck 1992; Furedi 1997), or coming to terms with social difference and its threat to personal economic safety and neighbourhood security (Taylor 1996), which are translated into micro-contextual fears of crime.

The second theme explored in this chapter considers the way in which the rational/irrational view of fear of crime presents a negative view of fear based on the assumption that fear de-motivates by causing people to withdraw from their normal activities (Maxfield 1984; Miethe 1995). Fear of crime has also been linked to neighbourhood disorganization and reduced informal social control, as portrayed in the 'Broken Windows' theory (Wilson and Kelling

1982). These views of fear, however, negate the possible positive effects of fear, such as the motivation of neighbourhood solidarity and communal responses to crime. Communal co-operation, or solidarity, trust and a sense of belonging can in turn mediate the negative aspects of fear by providing inner security (Komiya 1999; Walklate 1998). As I discuss later, the absence of social solidarity brought about by limited local social networks, late modern lifestyles and some aspects of the suburban environment resulted in isolation and insecurity for some people, which led to diffuse anxieties and also very specific micro-contextual fears. I argue that fear needs to be reconceptualised and seen as operating on a continuum from motivating to demotivating where the challenge for policy lies in recognising the threshold between the two in order to harness the positive effects of fear within communities.

Fear of crime

When I first moved in.....this whole little area was brand new.....and the first year was fine, no crime, and then after a year.....the girl a couple of doors away, her car was trashed a couple of times like the tyres were slit....and her windows were all smashed and the radio taken. That was the first incident. I didn't hear any more for a while and then people started to tell me about all the break-ins that...were going on along Acacia Drive which is the road coming up here. Well, then I did start to get a little bit.....unnerved by it...and then it started actually creeping into the cul-de- sac...somebody broke into (a neighbour's) garage one night and pinched his motorbike.....then the lad over the road, his shed was broken into and his lawnmower and his pushbike went....then it started that the next cul de sac round the corner, I don't know the people, they were...burgled and of course I was hearing this week after week and I really started to panic.

(Lisa)

Lisa, a forty year old divorcee living alone, recalled a spate of incidents which occurred a year after she had moved to Ash Close on the estate in Uppenhall. It was an account which had all the hallmarks of a high crime area and a vulnerable population, rather than a high status suburb. Her description is all the more significant given the fact that the reputation of Uppenhall as 'one of

the better areas' in the town, with low crime, influenced her decision to move into the area. She certainly did not expect to become the victim of crime there. 'I paid over the odds but I'm paying for the area....because it is a nice area...as in...low crime rate, or I thought there was 'til I moved in' she said. The fact that Lisa had paid more to live in a low crime area no doubt increased her concern about local crime.

In the context of police recorded crime figures (see Figure 7), Lisa's fear would appear to be irrational since they show that Uppenhall suffered relatively little crime when compared with other areas in the town. For example, between December 1994 and January 1997 there were 135 recorded crimes in Uppenhall as compared to nearly 900 in Millfields, an area with high levels of council housing near the centre of the town. Residents in Millfields were almost seven times more likely to be the victim of crime than those in Uppenhall. Furthermore, victimization in high crime areas has been shown to be unevenly distributed with concentrated repeat victimization (Baldwin and Bottoms 1976; Bottoms and Wiles 1986; Bottoms et al 1992). Therefore, taking into account unreported and unrecorded crime (Mirrlees-Black et al 1996), the likelihood of being victimized for some people in Millfields would be even higher. Uppenhall also experienced a more limited range of crimes. Millfields residents were likely to be the victims of serious crimes, such as rape, arson and robbery, which did not feature in Uppenhall.

The low risk of victimisation in Uppenhall accords with the findings of national and local crime surveys (Hough & Mayhew 1983; Chambers & Tombs 1984; Crawford et al 1990; Mayhew et al 1993; Mirrlees-Black et al 1996). As Figure 8 illustrates, the highest levels of crime occur in inner urban areas, particularly council owned estates housing low income families (Mayhew et al 1993).

Crime figures for Uppenhall and Millfields

December 1994 - January 1997

OFFENCE	Uppenhall	Millfields
Burglary dwelling	11	146
Burglary other	17	94
Drugs N/Not.	1	10
Drugs offence		11
Arson		5
Damage other	14	101
Damage vehicle	15	97
Fraud other		1
Obtain prop.		1
Obtain serv.		1
Indecent assault female	1	3
Indecent assault male		2
Rape		2
Other crime	1	21
Theft pedal cycle	7	33
Theft other	6	73
Robbery		7
Theft shop	2	1
Theft caravan		1
Theft from vehicle	38	144
Theft of vehicle	14	82
Taking without consent	2	21
Section 47 assault	5	23
Violence other		6
Assault police		3
Wounding/Section 18	1	9
Total	135	898

(Source: police crime records)

Figure 7

**Relative crime risks for residents of different ACORN
neighbourhood groups**

	Burglary with entry	Burglary attempts	All
Low risk			
B Modern family housing, high incomes	60	70	70
J Affluent suburban housing	80	55	70
Medium risk			
D Older terraced housing	115	110	115
F Council Estates - category II	130	175	150
High risk			
G Council estates - category III	255	330	285
H Mixed inner Metropolitan areas	205	150	180
Indexed national average	100	100	100

Source: Table A4.1 - 1992 British Crime Survey

Figure 8

Risks are also higher for households in rented accommodation, flats and terraced houses, than privately owned accommodation and detached houses (Mirrlees-Black et al 1996).

Much of the Uppenhall community beat police officer's time was spent dealing with issues of disorder rather than crime. During the time I observed her on beat (sixty four hours in eight shifts over a four month period), only two thefts were investigated, neither of which were residential (although other crime investigations may have taken place in my absence). One incident involved the theft of a car from the forecourt of a garage on the edge of the beat area near the town centre, and the other involved the theft of a bottle of cider from a supermarket in the parade of shops on Oak Tree Road. The perpetrator of the latter offence was a youth who lived in Uppenhall (his first offence) who was drunk at the time. Most of the community beat officer's time was spent visiting households which had suffered problems of nuisance and minor damage to property, often caused by children or older youths.

Since Lisa's expression of fear reflected similar concerns of most of the women who participated in the research, her fear of crime may have been influenced by her gender. Crime surveys, for example, show that in public settings women and the elderly experience fear of crime disproportionate to their risk of victimization, whereas young people, particularly men, are more likely to be the victims of crime (see for instance Mayhew et al 1993). However, the fear depicted in crime surveys and the media reinforces gender stereotypes which portray women and men as homogeneous groups based on women being fearful and men unafraid (Gilchrist et al 1998). Viewing gender and fear in this way presents an over-simplistic view of fear of crime since many women are not fearful and many men are (Gilchrist et al 1998).

Men are more likely to conceal their fears, especially when they are young and with their peers (Goodey 1997). Certainly among my younger male interviewees there was an air of bravado in response to my questions about threatening situations. Pete, for example, who was in his late thirties expressed no fears of physical attack, or of tackling an offender, because he felt physically capable of looking after himself. Colin took a similar view: 'I think if you disturb somebody nine times out of ten....they wouldn't be interested in tackling you, they'd be interested in getting away. In the large majority of cases I think I could handle myself anyway....there will be the odd time I don't....I will be out of my depth'.

However, as Farrall and Ditton (1999) argue, crime surveys take no account of the effects of different types of crime on fear and the different nature and duration of response. Colin *was* concerned about property crime, admitting that it 'impinged' on his life. 'I'm conscious of (crime) quite a lot' he said. 'Often it's on my mind, when I (come home and) open the front door...what am I going to find?' Furthermore, Mike and his wife Jenny, who were in their early sixties, both claimed to be unafraid of walking in the area at night after dark and yet there were specific circumstances which they chose to avoid for fear of being victimised by crime. Mike explained:

I wouldn't go...down....alleys at night on my own. I think it's not because you're frightened but I think it's because it's a silly thing to do....so many crimes seem to me to be opportunist. If there were two or three lads who'd had two or three drinks each and just happened to be walking down the same narrow path that you're walking....I would feel very apprehensive about that. I think we wouldn't put temptation in the way by.....appearing to be vulnerable whether it's me or...anybody on their own....it's a situation that....you'd be wise to avoid...so I certainly wouldn't....I wouldn't go down a....narrow unlit (alley)...at night if it was dark....it's common sense. Why put yourself into a position you don't have to put yourself into (when) common sense just instinctively tells you to go the other way?

Although Mike did not admit to being afraid, his comments do illustrate the multi-dimensionality of fear which crime surveys fail to detect (Farrall and Ditton 1999). Crime surveys also neglect the vicarious sources of fear (Gilchrist et al 1998; Pain 1995), which may relate for instance to stereotypes of particular places (Sibley 1995) and persons (Madriz 1997).

Moreover, basing fear on a rational calculus relating to crime figures assumes that people are aware of how statistically likely they are to be victimised (Lupton and Tulloch 1999) and can therefore rationally calculate their 'true' risk (Hollway and Jefferson 1997: 255). Douglas (1992) argues, however, that this individualistic view of the rational actor negates the individual's location within a particular community or shared cultural context. As Lupton and Tulloch (1999: 510) note, people are reflexive agents who experience and respond to crime through 'communal, aesthetic and shared symbolic meanings'. Fear therefore needs to be seen as a 'dimension of experience' which pervades daily life 'via ordinary discourses, rhetorics and routines' rather than official statistics (Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 512-513). For Lupton and Tulloch, what remains important rather than the need to distinguish between 'rational' or 'irrational' responses to crime is:

The assumption that fear of crime operates at a number of different levels of meaning and consciousness, emerging from and constantly reactive to direct personal experiences, knowledge about others' experiences and mediated sources of information, and also fitting into broader narratives concerning anxieties about 'the way society is today'. (Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 521)

The spate of crimes to which Lisa referred may have been due to the sort of upsurge in crime which is known to occur following the completion of new housing developments (Foster 1999). For example, Foster's (1999: 183) study of London's Docklands after the building boom of the 1980s revealed a 'crime problem' involving car crime and burglary in some of the new affluent areas during the first six to twelve months after residents had moved in. Lisa's

subsequent comment seemed to support this: 'I'll be quite truthful the last two years it hasn't been as bad...whether it's because it was an influx of new properties being built and people tried it on...but, it's wavered off and you don't hear much now'. Maybe because everyone was new to this part of the estate, a lack of familiarity with the neighbourhood and its people heightened Lisa's awareness of the crime talk disseminated by 'gossip networks' (Shapland and Vagg 1988: 19), channels of discourse about local issues of concern (Taylor 1995) established during a period of intense neighbouring that sometimes occurs on new estates (Bulmer 1986; Gans 1967).

Certainly gossip networks enhance fear because they situate crime news in the local context in a manner that expresses local concerns, conveying symbolic meaning rather than simply 'information' (Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 510). This was the case for Joyce who worked in her own hairdressing salon in Uppenhall. 'I've heard so many things off my customers' she said,

it frightens you really....you hear so many things happening....not this side of the town but.....the other side. People have gone out and there's been youths about and they've attacked them and different things. I'd be too worried to go out by myself....and if I was living.....by myself I wouldn't answer the door at night time....it doesn't matter who it was, I just wouldn't answer it.

Joyce was referring to 'the 'noises', 'talk', 'rumour' and 'myths' of crime' that circulate in specific locales (Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 512), but her comments also relate to a more general, discursive history and geographically to other events and other places (Taylor 1995; 1996). Perhaps in Lisa's account local gossip focused on bad news in the same way that the media are preoccupied with crime so that a few concentrated incidents appeared to be a crime wave (Cohen 1973).

Bad news is good news

The media's influence on fear of crime has been the subject of much debate. One view is that, despite the trivial and mundane nature of most crime (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Felson 1994), over-exposure to crime through media reporting heightens the expectation of victimization (Grabosky 1995). These arguments are influenced by cultivation theory which contends that the media's representation of crime is exaggerated, both in terms of probability and severity, producing a misleading view of the world which causes unnecessary anxiety about risk from violent crime (see Reiner 1997: 217-219 and Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 509 for an overview). Fear renders individuals open to manipulation and control, and even repression if it promises to relieve them of their anxieties and insecurities (Signorielli 1990).

However, the nature of the media's influence is not so clear cut. Sacco (1995) questions any causal link between media coverage of crime and fear. He argues that while the dichotomy between high public fears and actual rates of victimization may suggest that anxieties stem from vicarious sources, such as the media where crime coverage is high rather than direct experiences, there is little evidence to support the significance of media exposure on fear of crime. Lisa's account at the beginning of this section supports Sacco's (1995: 152) view that 'interpersonal channels' of communication are more likely to invoke fear than the media. On the other hand, three quarters of the people that I interviewed mentioned the media as the main source of their information about crime. While a link between media coverage of crime and fear is certainly plausible, it is not clear which comes first, whether fear leads people to seek greater exposure to crime by reading more crime news or vice versa (Reiner 1997). The fact remains that the media operate in a market and presumably therefore devote space to

crime because their readers want them to do so (Donnison 1998). However, as I argue shortly, fear is more likely to arise from a complex interrelationship between a number of factors which include the media.

The increasing amount of media coverage of crime, and the disproportionate concentration on violence, give the impression of escalating crime rates (Reiner 1997). Reflecting on some crimes reported in the local press, Neil said:

I think the other side (of town) there (are) problems. They've had quite a few...rapes, a murder...and attacks. You read about things like in the local paper....and that's quite worrying. I think there's...been a couple of attacks...in Colliers End...a girl was murdered.....that was earlier on this year. I know things like that happen...to our society....but you think Minington is quite a small town...so..it's a bit near.

'I am more aware now than I was' Fiona said. She put this down to 'listening to the radio, the news and reading in the paper'. 'The amount of (crime)...there isn't a week goes by without there's a murder...and....that's made me aware'. As these statements show, the globalisation of news (Giddens 1991a) results in remote and distant incidents being 'imported' into people's daily lives through television and national newspapers and used to uphold their concerns or fears (Shapland and Vagg 1988). At the same time the coverage of crime in the local news made many respondents feel there was a crime problem locally. 'It's just what we read in the paper' Doug pointed out. 'We have a local free paper and I must admit it does amaze me....there was a burglary on Milton Road or a car was pinched or a shed had been broken into'. From what he read in the local newspaper Jonathan was convinced of a high crime rate in Uppenhall. 'There's houses burgled every week, there's cars stolen off driveways'.

The media is also thought to have a significant social control effect. Media accounts of social issues, such as crime, shape public attitudes and government policy (Pearson 1983; Muncie 1999). The creation of folk devils and moral panics are often media-inspired (Cohen 1973) and used to stir public

indignation (Muncie 1987). With public support, media campaigns for action and criticisms of public policy then pressurise the government to introduce stiffer measures of control (Pearson 1983; Muncie 1987).

I now want to examine in greater depth the notion that fear of crime may be the result of a complex interrelationship between other anxieties and various influences relating to external factors, such as the media, and an individual's biography. I take as an individual example the case of Betty, a small, slightly built woman in her seventies with a wry sense of humour and outgoing personality, who lived in Maple Grove. Betty blamed the media for her fear of crime but, by exploring the 'situated narratives, myths and meanings within which fear of crime is generated' (Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 515), I aim to illustrate the wider context of her fear.

'A bag of nerves'

Media coverage of crime may raise fears through the stereotyping of certain victims of crime, such as women and the elderly (Kidd-Hewitt 1995). When Betty was widowed, she felt vulnerable living alone and the stories she read in the newspapers about elderly women being attacked in their own homes contributed to these feelings. 'I think the television and the newspapers....do more harm than good' she said,

because you're reading about murders, burglaries, robberies, muggings. I mean, these muggings....these old ladies that've bin thrashed in their own homes for the matter of fifteen or twenty pound. Some of those old ladies' faces I think are disgusting. What makes a youth or a man want to thrash an old lady?...I think it's awful. I think God if anybody got in here and done the same to me.

Yet the media stories and Betty's awareness of them remain a constant feature of media output (Reiner 1997). Betty's fear seemed to be heightened by the loneliness and insecurity she felt after being widowed and this acted 'as a magnet for other anxieties' (Hollway and Jefferson 1997: 265), such as fear of

crime. Since her husband's death Betty said she was 'a bag of nerves....an absolute bag of nerves' when she was at home. She was afraid of violent crime from intruders, or men who might persuade her to allow them into her home. These fears were intermingled with Betty's experience of an attempted break-in when her husband was still alive which also affected her feelings of vulnerability:

This were five-o'clock one morning....(my husband) was up. I heard him walking and mucking about and I'd got a curtain on...(the front door)... and I heard him pull the curtain back and then I shouted...."what is it?" He said "there's somebody just rung the doorbell". I jumped out of bed and this chap....he were trying to kick the door in. Well, my husband were going to come to open this door to have a look who it were that was in the drive. I said "oh no, don't open the door for God's sake". When (the man) heard my voice....cos I were beginning to panic, I were beginning to shout and I said "ring the police straight away", (the man) ran through the gate.

As a response to this incident the security of the property was increased and an intruder alarm and a security light on the drive were installed. 'I've had my windows and doors done since me husband died' she added, 'I do feel more secure knowing that the....chain's on and....there's a bolt on the gate'. Betty's trust in abstract systems (Giddens 1991a), such as security hardware, may link with the absence of social bonds and quality of association with others (Loader 1999), which were prominent features of the estate. Security hardware may have made her feel safer since she felt unable to rely on neighbours in the event of trouble, as her experience of a difficult family living next door revealed (see below). However, at a wider level, Betty's decision to invest in security reflects a general social trend among the affluent where security becomes another consumer choice which offers a sense of control over an unpredictable future (Loader 1999). I shall return to these issues in Chapter 6.

‘Neighbours from hell’

Betty’s former neighbours were abusive and intimidating and, as Pain (1993; 1995) argues, forms of abuse and harassment, which may be only minor, nevertheless help shape fear of crime. ‘They were the neighbours from hell, there’s no doubt about that’ Betty said.

It was in the early hours of the morning when....the music was at the loudest. Even Malcolm on the end, he’s heard it. He knew what was going on but.....different people said “I bet you’re glad they’ve gone” because they’d heard the music as they’d gone by....but there ain’t one that’d say anything at the time. Winnie....said to me after they’d gone she was relieved because she could go to bed at night knowing that she weren’t going to be woke up at three-o-clock in the morning with fighting and shouting and obscene language. The woman, her language were worse than a man’s, I’ll tell you, her language was obscene.....she threatened me with a milk bottle.....but to see her walk about you would have thought butter wouldn’t melt in her mouth.

Apart from the nuisance and intimidation, Betty also experienced ‘begging for food and cigarettes and one thing and another’, behaviour which may have gone beyond her normative expectations of neighbourly involvement. Betty lived in a world of moral minimalism similar to that which Baumgartner (1988: 133) describes in ‘Hampton’, an outlying suburb of New York City where, ‘among friends and neighbours, assistance is restricted to casual actions which entail few costs’ and ‘true sacrifices...are rare, particularly outside the household’.

Baumgartner (1988: 131) also found that conflicts within families, between neighbours and with strangers were dealt with by restraint and avoidance, and ‘positive obligations to assist others are....also minimal where moral minimalism flourishes’. Of course, restraint and avoidance may also be symptomatic of the fear of getting involved (Atkinson et al 1990). This was borne out in Betty’s experience. She felt that, although other residents suffered too, there had been no mutual support between them to help cope with the difficult family. ‘I’d gotta shoulder it on my own’ Betty said ‘my next door

neighbour Hazel, she's one of the best neighbours as anyone could have but I didn't want to involve her in it'. Betty also assumed that other people did not want to get involved: 'The (man) on the end....knew what was going on...but he used to cut these people's hair for them cos he's a barber (so) he didn't want to get involved'. Other local people knew of the problem but none wanted to help. 'When (the family) had gone' Betty commented 'they all said "oh, it is a blessing, oh, ain't it lovely now that they've gone"' but they didn't say anything at the time....I know it's difficult especially when you've gotta live by them'.

Although Betty admitted 'they didn't come over on to my property or anything like that' she was fearful of reprisals from the family, and seeing their son in the street reinforced her vulnerability. 'I saw the lad last Friday', she pointed out 'and... when he come...like that (indicates a threatening gesture with her fist) I thought ooh my God, cos he did threaten me with his mates while he was here. I thought...what if he comes and puts petrol through my (letterbox)?....these are the silly things as have gone through my mind'.

'An empty place'

The attempted burglary and 'problem' neighbours which Betty experienced undoubtedly contributed to her biography of fear. However, Betty's insecurity since her husband's death had little to do with feeling more secure when he was alive. 'If ever that chap had got in that morning....my husband wouldn't have bin no good' she said, 'no good at all'. Her husband's physical and mental state prior to his death meant that he was incapable of acting in their interests, as Betty pointed out: 'He said "I'll have a look". I said "don't you dare open that door"'. With my husband being in the state that he was....if...(he had) opened that door and...the bloke had hit him or hit me...we'd have...had it'.

Betty's fear of being in the bungalow did not arise from crime. 'The main reason for me feeling so uneasy is the loneliness' she said. 'I come in here on a Friday afternoon and I never see or hear another soul 'til Monday'. This account echoes Pain's (1995) contention that fear among the elderly is as much associated with particular time periods as places. After going out during the day Betty had to face returning to an empty place. 'I cannot stand coming back in this bungalow even when I've bin to my daughter's' she stated, 'they have to come in with me. I cannot shake this off of coming in to an empty place'. She continued:

I come in here hopin' I'm gonna find me husband to be quite honest with you.....and I know that I'm not but I can't help this feeling. Christine and Robert, that's my daughter and her husband....they only live up the road...they will bring me back....but I'll say to them "come in with me". I know there's nobody here but I'm just hopin' and prayin' that I can find my husband sittin' where you're sittin' but I know I can't.

Friends, neighbours and acquaintances are considered to be an important source of social support in bereavement (Kaunonen et al 1999) and Betty had received support from her neighbours. 'Joy'll pop round....Hazel pops round, next door.....Winnie, a door away, she'll come. Now the lady from Hong Kong, she's bin over....she's bin every day and had her tea and one thing and another'. But, for Betty the loneliness came when people had left: 'What gets me more than anything' she said, 'now....this afternoon we've had this chat, you've gotta go and leave me here'.

Between the living and the dead

Although mourning is often helpful in restoring the ontological security lost through bereavement (Seale 1998a), many bereaved people get caught between the living and the dead - the more they live with the dead, the more marginalised they feel from the living, and the more they live with the living, the more they feel they have abandoned the dead (Walter 1999). Furthermore,

death is usually experienced as a private rather than public loss and grief becomes a personal matter rather than a community affair (Seale 1998b). Social fragmentation means that people whom the bereaved comes into contact with are unlikely to have known the deceased (Walter 1999). This makes it difficult for the bereaved to 'construct the deceased as an honoured ancestor, except in highly private and individualized ways' (Walter 1999: 75). Betty's focus on the memory of her late husband not only reinforced her sense of loss (Walter 1999) but also made it difficult for her to commit to new meaningful relationships and led to an even greater sense of isolation. 'I know a fella (who's) bin a widower for years' Betty said,

he's younger than me and he's asked me (out). He doesn't ask me now because I don't give him...the right answer. I haven't seen him for weeks because I think he's...got fed up wi' me telling him I'm a goin' out and....I'm not. I could sort of pal up to him but, you see, I'm lookin' for somebody (like) my husband (who) were six foot tall, slim, good looking.

Although Betty's daughter and son-in-law lived locally she did not feel part of their busy lives. 'I've only got one daughter. She's got a job, they socialise, they play golf....she's in Denmark at the present time' Betty said, 'I know where they are but I wouldn't interfere with their lives. She's a good daughter....and he's a good son-in-law but I won't put on 'em'. Betty also found it difficult to gain access to other social networks. 'People have said join this club, join that club....I'm a member of two, they're set in their ways. If I could find somebody like myself that's looking for friendship. You can't find them' she said,

I've tried, I mean, there's one or two ladies down where I've bin today....majority of 'em are widows but they're in their eighties....some of them are bordering on ninety. They just have their dinner and a game of bingo....they get up and they go and that's it. Now there's one lady...she's eighty four as sits by me, I said to her "Mary, would you like to come up.....for one of the days". She said "yeah". I said "well, let me know when it's convenient and then I'll make the arrangements" but whether she'll come I don't know....but that's only one off.

Betty's inability to engage in meaningful relationships left her alone in the home for long periods. As Walter (1999: 76) suggests, 'in so far as marriages are built up through every day conversation, the widow or widower mourns the loss of the very conversation that had hitherto helped them repair life's stresses'. Thus Betty became easy prey to outside influences, such as media reports of crime, which emphasised the vulnerability of her situation and enhanced her fear of crime.

Deeper anxieties

According to Giddens (1991a), anxiety is a generalised state of the emotions of an individual which relates to the overall security system developed by the individual. Fear on the other hand is a response to situationally specific phenomena associated with particular risks or dangers (Giddens 1991a). Anxiety expresses 'internal dangers' rather than 'external threats' but, 'because anxiety is diffuse, it is free-floating: lacking a specific object, it can become pinned to items, traits or situations which have an oblique (although unconsciously precise) reaction to whatever originally provoked it' (Giddens 1991a: 44).

This definition implies that people's general anxieties about crime and the state of society may result from other, deeper insecurities, which become focused on crime (see also Girling et al 2000; Hollway and Jefferson 1997; Lupton and Tulloch 1999). This is because 'despite objective threats from war, recession, famine and the like, it is personal insecurity that provokes most subjective concern among people' (Berki, quoted in Johnston 1996: 230). In this section I discuss how social trends in late modern society have contributed to deeper anxieties. I examine the isolating effects of affluence in tandem with social and technological change, particularly their influence on social relations by affording greater privacy and reducing the need for communal sharing, and the

reciprocity of these effects in relation to the suburban environment. I argue that insecurities due to isolation arising from these factors, rather than crime per se, gives rise to people's fears.

Fear from isolation

I am more nervous....these days than I have ever been....but these are the times, aren't they really? Everybody's more nervous I think. When I look back at my childhood we used to live in a very lonely place, I used to walk home no problem at all....I wouldn't do it now.

(Rose)

Underlying Rose's 'nervousness' was a fear of crime, and particularly violent crime, which pervaded her life on the estate in Uppenhall and echoed the experiences of other, mainly women, interviewees. The contrast between her current fears and her lack of fear in the past might be related to age since studies have shown that victimisation has a greater impact on elderly people with a lasting effect on their quality of life (Yin 1980; Todd 1981; Feinburg 1981). Furthermore, surveys have shown that the elderly, and particularly elderly women, are the most fearful of crime (eg. Mirrlees-Black et al 1996). However, Maxfield (1987) suggests that other insecurities may enhance concerns about victimization, and it has been argued that elderly women are no more concerned about violent crime than younger women (Pain 1995), a fact borne out by my female interviewees who, irrespective of their age, echoed similar sentiments about being afraid in their homes or on the estate.

Rose grew up in a close-knit mining village in Wales where extended family networks were an important source of emotional and practical support, similar to the kinship networks which Young and Willmott (1957) found in their study of Bethnal Green in London. 'You had your relations there for a start off, your family', Rose pointed out. 'They played a very important part 'cos I lived with my grandparents, my father went abroad to South Africa to work, 1927. He

couldn't get work in Wales so he went to South Africa at the time and...my mother and I moved back to (her) parents and that's where I stayed in the family home. I was brought up in a very tight family atmosphere...and then the people round were just the same....people cared. Here they call it nosiness, don't they?'

Rose's early life experiences may have seemed less fearful, despite the physical isolation that she referred to in the place where she was brought up, because she felt secure in the close-knit character of the community. By contrast, the built up nature of the estate in Uppenhall felt unsafe to her and some other residents, particularly women who were at home during the day, because they felt isolated both physically and socially and experienced loneliness as a result. For them their own homes became the principal context of their fear. Physical isolation came from the design of the estate which discouraged public realm activity by limiting through access (Jacobs 1961), and the design of individual properties by siting principal living spaces at the rear for greater privacy (see Craik 1989). Social isolation resulted from busy lifestyles, with many men and women on the estate out at work during the day. In the evenings and weekends they wanted peace and quiet to relax in private (see Devine 1989; 1992).

Close community relations and a sense of belonging have been linked to ontological security (Komiya 1999). In an analysis of low crime rates in Japan, Komiya focuses on cultural factors, identifying two social worlds which embodied Japanese legal culture. One world is known as '*uchi*', which deals with 'acquaintances or members of the group to which the individual belongs', and the other is '*yoso*', which deals with 'strangers or non-members of the group' (Komiya 1999: 372). The main thrust of Komiya's analysis involves the informal social control processes which operated within the *uchi* context and their impact on the suppression of crime. The relevance of Komiya's work to

this discussion is that reciprocal benefits of interdependence between members of a social group within a particular locale provide ontological security.

According to Komiya (1999: 372) the *uchi* world can be understood as a 'quasi-community' in which social relations are based on '*giri*', Japanese traditional duty operating as a rule of conduct, which 'indicates appropriate behaviour in a range of *uchi* contexts'. While *giri* makes great demands on members of an *uchi* world, it also offers rewards. This 'expectation of return favours' gives rise to a sense of dependence, and one such reward is a feeling of security. Thus '*uchi* is the focus of ontological security' (Komiya 1999: 373).

There is no doubt that there are less beneficial aspects of this type of social arrangement. Komiya admits that *giri* is a tremendous burden and failure to maintain the commitment, or to deviate from the norms of the *uchi* world, may bring the severe penalty of exclusion. The system is also hierarchical and paternalistic (Komiya 1999) and not conducive to independent thought or deeds, thus overwhelming the rights of individuals (Braithwaite 1989). It is also important to point out that *uchi* and *yoso* social worlds are culturally specific and it would be inappropriate to translate their particularities into western culture. Nevertheless, I am interested in the principle that a sense of belonging based on interdependence within a social group leads to greater feelings of security. Taking this into account I shall examine how the converse of this principle may explain people's high fear of crime.

The effects of affluence

Sennett (1971) regards interdependence as an important factor in community life. He argues that 'a community is not simply a social group or an unrelated collection of individuals living in the same place - it is a group in

which people belong to each other, share something in common' (Sennett 1971: 38). Increased affluence, however, reduces the need for sharing in a material sense and this reduces social interaction, creating isolation in communal contacts as well as satisfying desires for structured exclusion (Sennett 1971). Suburbs have tended to be, although not exclusively (Clapson 1998), the preserve of the wealthy and privileged who have sought to remove themselves from the noise, pollution and overcrowding of cities (Archer 1997; Girouard 1985; Silverstone 1997). Silverstone (1997: 5) claims that the appeal of the suburbs for the upwardly mobile and rising middle classes is that they fulfil aspirations towards social distinction and physical distance among a social group who can afford such luxuries and are 'quick to protect and defend their gains against others who want a share'.

Clapson (1998) notes that affluence was also an important factor in satisfying desires for privacy among the working class when moving out of the cramped conditions of many inner urban areas since it gave them a certain amount of choice in where they were re-settled. Affluence provided David and Karen with the choice of a detached house in a position which provided them with the social distance they desired from their neighbours. 'Beggars can't be choosers' David said, 'you have to live to the means of your income. We had a choice here, we were lucky, we could afford this (house)....and we chose to live somewhere with a bit more solitude'. Pete had similar desires. 'I had enough money to buy any house on this estate, quite easily' he pointed out. '(But) I've got my wealth for solitude' he explained, justifying his choice of a house 'on the edge' of the cul-de-sac rather than in the middle.

Allan (1989) observes that limited local social networks and less dependency on others have become features of contemporary

neighbourhoods, and a variety of studies show that this is a process not limited to the middle class (eg. Devine 1989; 1992; Willmott and Young 1960; Young and Willmott 1957). However, as I argued in chapter 1, individualism is fundamental to British culture; 'ultimate values are individual' and thus 'individualism is built into 'custom and practice', into local work places and community organizations, into all commonsensical explanations of why people do what they do' (Halsey 1995: 3). Accelerated economic, social and technological change in late modernity has facilitated individuation (Cross 1997). For instance, increased affluence, particularly among the working class (Halsey 1995), and a move from geography-dependent manufacturing industry to high mobility service sector employment (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; France and Wiles 1998), have led to social and geographical mobility (Halsey 1995).

Car use and technological developments in communications have encouraged the fragmentation of 'supportive interaction and exchange' which have traditionally taken place in urban centres and local communities (Murrain 1993: 83). Murrain argues that car use requires considerable capital and revenue costs, forcing many families to buy cheaper houses in locations less favourable to their daily routines, perpetuating the social cost of car use in terms of individuation and isolation. For, as Ravetz (1980) points out, car use is heavily biased against certain sectors of the population, such as the young, the elderly and the disabled.

All of these processes have contributed to what Giddens (1991a) refers to as the disembedding of social relations from localities and their reconstitution across wide time-space distances. This is not to suggest that social relations have ceased to exist in localities, since networks of interest have tended to replace those based on material need (Crow and Allan 1994). However,

while interest networks create social bonds between people that share common interests, they exclude others, reinforcing their sense of isolation. For example, studies have shown that people with little social embeddedness suffer higher levels of loneliness and social isolation (Wenger et al 1996). My earlier discussion of Betty, who felt isolated and lonely after the death of her husband, reinforces the point and provides a poignant example of the relationship between isolation and fear.

Busy lives

The processes of change which I have described have had a profound effect on lifestyles, leaving little time for social commitment, or indeed informal social control (I discuss the effects of busy lives on informal social control in chapter 6). Cross (1997) suggests that changes in employment practices, such as flexible working hours, has led to a diffusion of work and leisure. Driven by consumerism the market colonizes not only suburban space, but also 'weekend time' (Cross 1997: 109). For instance, as shopping has become an out-of-town, twenty four hour activity (Cross 1997), it has also become an activity which combines 'aesthetic pleasure' with a 'promise of material abundance' (Reeve 1996: 62).

Cross (1997) argues that this has condensed the time people spend in their homes, and free time at home is spent catching up with domestic chores. At the same time, the decline of economic power of many wage earners, for instance through short term contracts and productivity agreements, has reduced the ability to get more free time (Cross 1997). David confirmed these trends in his own family lifestyle. '(At) the weekend' he pointed out 'I usually have a little bit of work to catch up, paper work from work. If I've got an assignment coming up from university...we have our own computer here so we tend to bash out on that....(and) weekends is catch up on bits of maintenance on the

house....just generally tidy up'. Doug and Liz agreed: 'We're out...five days (a week)' Doug explained, 'and...at weekends then you catch up with your home....things that you don't get round to doing in the week'.

Increased affluence has intensified leisure by providing access to time and labour- saving gadgetry (Cross 1997) and, at the same time, opened up a multitude of opportunities for leisure consumption, as exemplified by Simon's busy schedule: 'I swim every day of the week....then three days a week I play golf....they are my two interests, although I do geneology as well but I haven't touched on that for a little while. I find with swimming and playing golf and doing the paperwork as far as (my wife's) business is concerned, walking the dogs for my daughter...my time is pretty well filled up'. The diffusion of work and leisure was evident in Karen's family life. 'We're quite hectic really....we're going all the time' Karen commented. Neil and Cathy were similar; they spent little time at home because of their 'demanding lifestyles'. 'We just don't have the time (for socialising)' Cathy explained, 'we're in and out most of the time'.

The social cost of busy lives at a community level was acknowledged by some respondents. For instance, most of Frank's family interests lay outside their local residential community, as he pointed out:

(My wife) plays netball. My weekends are taken up generally speaking during the day (with) football...in the football season. In the summer I play golf so.....we've got plenty of interests (and) things to do and with five children it keeps you busy. They're always doing something.... swimming or Brownies.....or football or going to see somebody or (going) somewhere for a talk. There's always things to do outside of the estate community.

'Most people lead very busy lives now' Norma said. 'They're involved in a lot of diverse organisations or work very long hours and are perhaps not interested in (social interaction) any more....or maybe they're interested but haven't got

the time'. Bob felt that the social distance among his neighbours reflected busy lives, particularly with work commitments, more than desires for privacy (see chapter 3). Doug emphasised the financial imperative of people's busy lives. 'A lot of people are all too busy just getting on with their lives. They're all rushing around....rush rush here, and they're too busy making megabucks....earning lots of money.....saving up to move on somewhere else'.

Not everyone led busy lives, however, and, as Joy observed when walking her dog around the estate, some people, particularly elderly people who were less mobile, felt socially isolated by the busy lifestyles of their neighbours and the social distance this encouraged. 'Everyone younger is out at work all day around here' Joy said, 'both the men and the women, so it's only the older folk who are around. In fact soon after I moved here I said good morning to one elderly lady down the road, she said "I've lived here eighteen months and you're the first person who has said good morning to me". I thought that was really sad'. Sandy only worked part-time so spent long periods on her own at home. The isolation she felt during the day made her feel insecure and vulnerable. 'I never ever leave my front door open or even unlocked, it's always locked. If I'm out in the garden I always have the back gate locked simply because it's so quiet here....during the day there's nobody around and you just don't know who is about. It's ever so strange because it is so quiet.....and if I did get into trouble there's nobody around to hear me'.

Sandy liked to go out jogging and she did not have any fear of running around the estate like she did alone in the home. 'A lot of people say to me "you're very brave going out running on your own" but it's something I've always done' she said. Apart from some isolated areas, she would also run further afield. 'If I go down by the canal, Jonathan goes with me. I would never go somewhere like that on my own' she said, 'but saying that I'd run from here up

to Hightown Park, up by the crem(atorium). That's quite open....but there's always cars going up and down....so I still feel safe'. Sandy's statement reinforces Jacobs' (1961: 44) claim that 'a well-used city street is apt to be a safe street. A deserted city street is apt to be unsafe'. Sandy felt safe 'where there's houses...and even where there's people walking up and down the streets'. She added 'I have been out at about seven-o'clock in the morning and (with) people walking their dogs....I never feel unsafe then'. Feeling safe with people around and isolated and fearful without is an issue which also relates to the isolating effects of the suburban environment which I now address.

Effects of the suburban environment

Loneliness and isolation have been found to be features of the suburban environment and its social life, especially for women (Chambers 1997; Willmott and Young 1960; Young and Willmott 1957). Hillier and Hanson (1984) argue that isolation may well be the result of a lack of integration of suburban spatial structures into the global order of the urban system; in other words, the fragmentary nature of suburban planning, with its ubiquitous use of culs-de-sac, prevents through movement and therefore wider social and spatial connections. In fact Hillier and Hanson (1984: 24-25) suggest that localised and segregated spaces create local identities but tend to be more lifeless, correlating with 'ordinary verbal accounts of isolation and alienation, which are often vaguely said to be the products of architecture'.

In Uppenhall the cul-de-sac was the 'significant social unit in the community' (Gans 1967: 173). I have previously described how social networks rarely developed outside individual culs-de-sac (see chapter 3) therefore the fractured nature of social relations across the wider estate were mirrored by the fragmented environment that cul-de-sac layouts tend to produce (Steventon 1996). The private access at the end of Poplar Drive exemplified the sort of

physical separation that occurs in areas of low density, where plots are laid out and dwellings designed and orientated for maximum privacy. For example, the bungalows of Simon and Joyce and their neighbours Mike and Jenny were large and spacious and set well apart from the rows of properties fronting on to the remainder of Poplar Drive. ‘Cocooned with properties on three quarters with six foot fences’, as Simon described, the bungalows were physically and visually cut off from the rest of the street.

The quietness and privacy had attracted Simon and Joyce. ‘Well, it did for me in the first place’ Joyce said, ‘we can’t see very much because we live on the back, the bedrooms are on the front’. But even if they could see out from their living spaces, being at the end of the cul-de-sac there was nothing to see. ‘We just don’t get people coming up here’ Simon explained, ‘the only people we actually see are our immediate neighbours or tradespeople....the paper boy or girl, the milkman first thing in the morning’.

The arrangement of Mike and Jenny’s property next door was the same. ‘You can’t see much’ Mike pointed out, ‘if you’re not in the dining room....you can only see opposite the end of Simon’s drive. If you’re in the dining room you can see another few yards. This morning I was looking for the paper boy who was late but.....the only way to see if he’s coming is to actually go outside’. Mike and Jenny had also been attracted to the privacy and seclusion. ‘This bungalow seemed to have what we wanted....nice area and....very private, especially being right on the...end here. It is secluded and has given us the privacy behind....that we like....that we were used to’ Mike pointed out. But ‘it leaves you a little bittoo secluded at times’ he added. His wife, Jenny agreed ‘yes, it does’ she said. ‘Yes, in an odd sort of way I feel sometimes quite vulnerable up here’.

Jenny did not have the same feelings in their last house which was situated on a busy road with fields at the back. 'Where we lived before I haven't felt so alone as I do up here.....possibly because I had neighbours on both sides and there was people just across the road and there was cars going by all the time' Jenny said, echoing Hillier et al's (1983: 63) contention that 'feeling safe....depends largely on areas being in continuous occupation and use'. 'Here...I do, to a certain extent, feel vulnerable' Jenny continued. Mike described the difference between their current and previous situations:

The (previous road) was a very busy road...not so busy for people walking about but nevertheless you do see people on foot and you get an awful lot of traffic and....if I feel a bit solitary perhaps, it's no good going and looking out the window here because you won't see anybody. If you (stood) in the window at the (previous house)....there's cars and buses and lorries and all sorts all the time....all the time, day and night....and.....to me, this is so quiet. We used to think we didn't notice the noise and the traffic.....you don't really notice it all that much but..... there were times when you did notice it.

For Mike the current location was peaceful and quiet which he mostly appreciated but Jenny saw things differently. 'I can hear the silence here.....that's how I feel' she said. Their neighbour Joyce had been used to more activity too prior to moving to Uppenhall and sometimes found the quiet of her current location overwhelming:

I've always mixed up with a lot of people because....before I married...I did my nursing training....and I like to really be with a lot of people. You get used to listening to what people are saying and doing and...sometimes I think it's very quiet up here, especially when Simon's playing golf. I've always said....if anything happened to (Simon) I wouldn't stop, I'd leave tomorrow...where there was more going on....because you don't see life....you sit out the back here....and you don't see very much life.

Jenny and Joyce felt vulnerable in their home environment because it isolated them from the signs of regular activity and daily life which made them feel safer, even though they may not be part of it. One aspect of Jenny and Joyce's home environment which especially made them feel vulnerable,

however, was the fact that they felt trapped at the end of the cul-de-sac with no escape in the event of an intrusion. Jenny said 'I think the fact that if someone came up here...they can't go any further....they are at a sort of dead end....and if I went to the door....and someone was up to no good then I wouldn't quite know what...to do'. Joyce expressed a similar sentiment. 'It's a funny feeling', she said,

if I'm here by myself sometimes I get a bit worried in case somebody was to come through them gates and on to the back and Simon wouldn't be here, say two youths...that would frighten me. But if you could see things going on in front perhaps you could get out quick to sort of tell somebody that you'd got intruders. I know it sounds silly but if I was here by myself....I wouldn't feel very safe...it's a funny feeling. I like to listen to the traffic going by and people...some life going on. Although I have my quiet moments, it's lovely when it is quiet, but I do like to see life going on.

This feeling of entrapment was not shared by Mike and Simon. They perceived their situation to be safe because the isolated nature of their domains meant that intruders were less likely to be aware of their existence and strangers had no reason to go there because they were unable to pass through. 'We're a little fortunate because we're out on a limb and we possibly wouldn't see people of that nature' Simon pointed out. 'That is a problem with passing traffic and that's why I feel secure here because...it's a cul de sac..it's a private road'.

Mike reinforced the point:

I was more aware of....being vulnerable (in the previous house) because the whole of the...area behind the (row of houses) was open and....that (meant) easy access to anybody's gardens (without) walking down the front path....and I think that always made the...(previous house) vulnerable. Here I feel rightly or wrongly that because of where we are....I don't think a lot of people are really aware that this place is here 'cos unless you have reason to drive up to the end of Poplar Drive.....you wouldn't know that it...just ends....and people, if they don't have any reason to come up here don't come up here....so I think this just has an effect of making me feel....more secure.

These views reiterate different themes in the literature about the awareness spaces of offenders (Brantingham and Brantingham 1984; 1991) and the

benefits of restricting movement through an estate (Newman 1973; Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994). Brantingham and Brantingham (1984) argue that offenders usually operate on 'pathways' and at 'nodes' which they routinely use, and crime occurs less in areas which lie outside their cognition. This suggestion links with the idea that restricting access through residential areas removes any reason for strangers to enter (Newman 1973; Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994) and therefore maintains those areas outside the cognitive awareness of potential offenders.

But there are problems with this view. The restriction of access does not necessarily deter strangers, as Joyce recalled: 'I've often seen different people walking up...and Rose (next door) has noticed people....we sometimes get young fellows coming up in the cars...whether they think they can get out at the top, I don't know'. It also heightens fear of strangers (Steventon 1996), which Joyce displayed. 'If I see somebody I don't know, I'm very suspicious' she said.

Moreover, the gendered nature of fear and perceptions of vulnerability apparent in Joyce and Jenny's accounts highlights the difficulties with policies that generalise the design of place to reduce crime and fear of crime. As the example of these two couples show, the men's experiences were very different to the women's. The men felt secure because they did not seem to notice strangers, other than tradespeople, in the vicinity in the way that the women did. As Simon pointed out, 'we don't get strangers...(because) this is a private road serving the three bungalows'. The women's awareness of strangers may be due to the greater likelihood of them spending more time alone in the home. While Mike worked, Jenny was at home all day. Joyce spent part of her time in her hairdressing salon, but often when she was at home Simon was playing golf. Of course, the men might have been

unwilling to admit their fear (Goodey 1994), although Mike did acknowledge that the quietness could be overwhelming at times. However, where crime prevention policies do not take account of gendered experiences, and where those giving design/crime prevention advice are men (see Steventon 1994 where all of the police architectural liaison officers interviewed were men), they may fail to take full account of women's perspectives and thus fail to reduce their fears (I discuss these issues further in chapter 7).

'Broken windows' and the rationality of fear

In this section I want to return to the seemingly irrational nature of Lisa's fear of crime outlined earlier in this chapter, focusing my discussion on one particular theory: 'Broken Windows' (Wilson and Kelling 1982 [see also Skogan 1986]). This theory assumes a rational cause and effect approach to fear of crime. Wilson and Kelling argue that cues of environmental neglect, such as litter, graffiti and vandalism, and social neglect, such as drunkenness and begging, signal neighbourhood decline which causes fear in local residents. Fear results in a reduction in informal social control which in turn allows the infiltration of petty crime. This increases people's fear leading to a further reduction in informal social control allowing more serious crime to flourish and a spiral of decline ensues.

While I do not wish to downplay the role of the factors identified by Wilson and Kelling (1982) in some circumstances, the determinacy of their theory, however, is problematic for two important reasons. First, the role of the environment as a precipitator of fear is far more complex. For instance, Foster's (1995: 567) study of the Riverside Estate in East London shows that, despite the estate having features thought to promote crime and fear such as 'adverse design features' (see for example Coleman 1985), and a 'formidable

appearance' (Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994), together with a poor reputation, almost fifty per cent of residents expressed satisfaction with the estate and did not perceive crime to be a problem. Conversely, the ordered nature of Uppenhall, with few signs of environmental neglect, did little to quell the fears of many residents, a situation mirrored by the affluent suburb of Baumgartner's (1988) study in America, where fears were high but crime levels low. As Pollard (1997) points out, environmental neglect is more likely to have an impact on the morale of residents rather than their fear, although for some people in some circumstances morale and fear may not be mutually exclusive.

Moreover, the relationship between crime, victimization and fear is mediated by people's relationship with others in their local community (Walklate 1998; Watt and Stenson 1998). Walklate studied two areas in Salford: Oldtown which had high levels of crime but a strong sense of community; and Bankside, which local residents considered to be 'going downhill' with a strong sense of lost community (Walklate 1998: 560). 'Being local' in Oldtown allowed people to make sense of their daily lives, and thereby feel more secure in the context of high crime (Walklate 1998: 555). Local networks based on trust reduced people's fears of victimization (Evans et al 1996; Walklate 1998).

In Bankside, however, the perceived lack of community co-operation, together with lack of trust, even of neighbours, left 'all sorts of spaces for the generation and perpetuation of other fears' (Walklate 1998: 560). Walklate's research not only stresses the point that fear of crime can result from other insecurities, but also illustrates the point I made earlier in this chapter about how factors such as community spirit, or sense of belonging, can influence fear of crime irrespective of prevailing environmental conditions.

The continuum of fear

My second criticism of the 'broken windows' theory is the inference that fear of crime only negatively impacts on people. As well as having limiting effects such as restraint, fear or anxiety can mobilise adaptive responses and novel initiatives; in other words fear may be associated with courage and resolution (Giddens 1991a). I argue also that there are positive aspects to fear which were evident in my research. For instance, Rose, who was a Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, used fear as a source of motivation in periods when there was little crime to report. 'I used to send these little notes round' she pointed out, 'anything that happened I let them know...and whip them up because you become lax, don't you?...after a while, but I kept the little whip going - so-and-so was burgled last night, it's your turn next sort of thing - and a little bit of fear sometimes does (the trick)' (see also McConville and Shepherd 1992).

Rose used these tactics to avoid the cyclic nature of vigilance (Pascoe 1993b). However, she acknowledged that too much fear could, as Miethe (1995) suggests, result in people withdrawing from daily life, losing the potential for informal social control as Wilson and Kelling (1982) predict. 'I've had to think twice' she said 'about (what she reported to them) because some of the ladies around here are extremely delicate (in) nature. They don't want to hear about these things.....they're shocked, over-shocked at things. I've had to sit down many a time before writing my little pithy notes, wondering whether the contents would be too strong for them'.

Lisa also observed the positive effect of fear on vigilance. 'If something happens you're on your guard more, you're more aware....you do talk to people about it' she said. Lisa's comment suggests that, at least to some extent, fear can actually precipitate informal social control by pulling the community

together. As I argued in chapter 3, fear of difference and the crime associated with otherness reinforces a strong collective identity and, as I illustrate in chapter 6, this identity together with the shared norms, values and aspirations which are represented by it forms a powerful structural and ideological mechanism of social control. The reinforcement of identity by fear is more likely when threat is perceived to be external to the community since, as Walklate's (1998) research in Salford well illustrates, lack of trust in neighbours increases fear. The absence of threat, on the other hand, as Pascoe (1993b) rightly argues, can result in residents becoming relaxed and letting down their guard. Lisa acknowledged this point: 'It's like everything, it's a flash in the pan, a couple of months later you all go back to normal'.

Goodey (1997) suggests that fear operates on a continuum. Unlike the notions of gender-based continuums of unsafety (Stanko 1990) and violence (Godenzi 1994), Goodey believes fear is influenced less by the traditional view of gender experiences of fear (or fearlessness - see also Jefferson 1997: 548) and more by events and stages experienced in the lifecourse. She states:

Masculinity, as experienced by the individual, is best understood as being anywhere on a continuum from what is traditionally perceived as feminine or masculine. The fearful or fearless experience of crime and danger while, by definition, at different ends of a continuum of fear, can no longer be viewed as gendered experience. In turn, each individual's many experiences of fear and fearlessness shift back and forth along the fear continuum according to meta discourses in the lifecourse such as ageing and parenthood which are part of the individual's personal biography' (Goodey 1997: 403).

While Goodey suggests that extremes of fear and fearlessness lie at either ends of a continuum, she makes no reference to the outcome of that fear. I suggest that not only fear itself, but also the outcome of fear operates on a continuum (see Figure 9); in other words, fear shifts between motivating positive action, as the accounts of Rose and Lisa above illustrate, or de-motivating for instance by

Fear and motivation: the Continuum of Fear

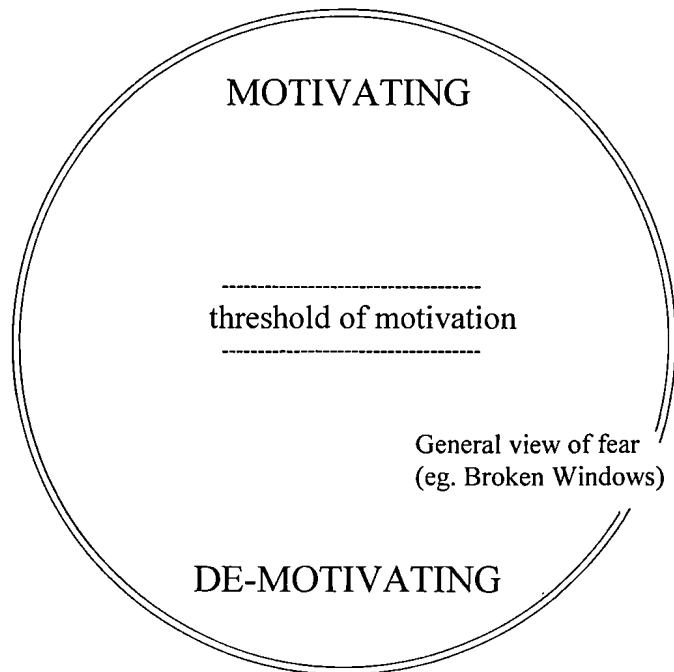


Figure 9

reducing informal social control, as Wilson and Kelling (1982) predict. The threshold of fear will also shift according to the circumstances suggested by Goodey (1997), but therein lies a challenge for policy to recognise and address the factors which push fear in communities over the threshold of motivation in order to harness the positive aspects of fear of crime.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that fear of crime featured prominently in the lives of many people that I interviewed in Uppenhall. However, by situating those fears in the context of low recorded crime rates one is at risk of making judgements about the rationality of people's fears. While it is important to acknowledge, as left realists suggest, that to some extent crime does have a material base in people's lives and therefore 'sometimes fear of crime is simply fear of crime' (Lupton and Tulloch 1999: 515), fear in a context of low risk is more likely an expression of a complex interrelationship of different insecurities arising from both micro-contextual and wider, diffuse sources. These anxieties surface as a result of life course experiences combined with the fact that crime is made more visible by myth and folklore from local gossip and rumour, or media focus on crime.

While fear is a response to a specific threat, anxiety is more diffuse, 'a generalised state of the emotions of the individual' and has to be understood in relation to the overall security system of the individual (Giddens 1991a: 43). I have argued that anxieties arose from feelings of dislocation and isolation from meaningful communal contact based on trust and a sense of belonging. For some people isolation and loneliness were the result of desires for privacy or the busy lifestyles of neighbours and these feelings were reinforced by the fragmented nature of the suburban environment in which they lived. This

emphasises the spatial, as well as social, aspects of fear, issues which were highlighted in relation to the Willow Close play area in the last chapter.

The conceptualisation of fear in theories such as 'Broken Windows' (Wilson and Kelling 1982) assumes that fear only has a negative effect on communities. I have argued that fear may also precipitate a positive response by motivating informal social control, but the relationship is complex as the next chapter illustrates. There appears to be a threshold up to which fear motivates solidarity and a communal response to crime, but over which withdrawal from social life and a breakdown of informal social control occurs. The threshold will vary according to individual experiences and the particularities of the community, and will also vary over time because of the dynamic nature of communities (Crow and Allan 1994).

Chapter 6

Preserving peace and tranquillity
Crime control

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the nature of informal social control and its influence on the maintenance of low crime. Informal social control is acknowledged as an important part of crime management in localities (Brewer et al 1998; Foster 1995; Jacobs 1961; Shapland and Vagg 1988). According to Jacobs (1961: 41), 'the first thing to understand is that the public peace - the sidewalk and street peace - of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves'. Foster (1995: 564) suggests that these controls are 'a powerful inhibitor to the commission of crime'.

A breakdown of informal social control is thought to allow crime to flourish (Klinger 1997; Wilson and Kelling 1982). Klinger (1997: 278) argues that 'one critical reason why some communities develop and sustain high rates of crime is that crime and control are related in a dynamic process, whereby increasing crime compromises the capacity of local control mechanisms to regulate deviance, which in turn, allows crime to thrive'. However, informal social control may still operate despite high crime levels (Foster 1995), or in situations of social disorganisation, such as civil unrest (Brewer et al 1998). Furthermore, the absence of informal social control may not lead to increased crime (Baumgartner 1988). In her study of an American suburb, Baumgartner (1988: 3) found that residents were 'reluctant to exercise any social control against one another at all', yet there was no conflict, only 'a widespread tranquillity so often noted in suburbia'. These contradictions highlight the complexity of informal social control and its interaction with crime (Foster 1995). They also emphasise the different ways in which informal social control can operate in communities (Brewer et al 1998).

The paradox highlighted by Baumgartner (1988) echoes a similar paradox in my research. I describe a socially and physically fragmented, and yet culturally cohesive, community. The community dynamics reflected the nature of informal social control in the suburb. For instance, informal social control is often portrayed as a range of activities which include 'watching', 'noticing and defining', 'making decisions as to action', and 'taking action' (Shapland and Vagg 1988: 66). However, low crime in the suburb I researched had little to do with the actions people took. The physical and social aspects of the suburb militated against the type of public responsibility and collective action envisaged by residential defence strategies, such as Neighbourhood Watch (McConville and Shepherd 1992). Limited social networks and a fragmented environment inhibited more extensive patterns of mutual aid. Desires for privacy took precedence over opportunities for surveillance. Busy lives meant an absence of 'capable guardians' (Cohen and Felson 1979). Consumerist trends among the affluent towards the commodification of security (Loader 1999), and the transfer of trust from the locality to abstract systems (Giddens 1991a), encouraged individualised means of crime control.

Structural, cultural and ideological controls, or 'all the processes we use to shape the people around us into our particular culture or ways of behaving', are also considered important in preventing crime (Shapland and Vagg 1988: 66). I argue that, in the type of community of low commitment apparent in my research, these processes assume greater importance than individual crime preventive actions. Control and context interact through social structural features of the local community or neighbourhood (Brewer et al 1998) and through residents' sense of community and shared culture (Braithwaite 1989; Brewer et al 1998). These controls can be inclusive and reintegrative (Braithwaite 1989), or exclusive and excluding (Bottoms and Wiles 1986; Massey 1995).

The structural, cultural and ideological controls evident in my research were exclusive and excluding in several ways: social identity and conformity were reinforced by a fear of difference and fear of being different (Seidler 1997); shared norms and values were based on similarity and materialism, rather than shared material need (Sennett 1971); the housing market was instrumental in the maintenance of status, and individual and collective vested interests, through investment in property (Bottoms and Wiles 1986; Farrar 1997); desires for 'peace and tranquillity' were almost universal. These controls established 'boundaries' of social differentiation, intended to keep those who did not belong in the locality at bay (Suttles 1972).

Physical fragmentation

Does the environment influence human behaviour? Newman (1973), in his theory of defensible space, argues that it can. He suggests that the design of spaces can precipitate informal social control by harnessing territorial instincts in people. His ideas stemmed from a study of American high density, multi-storey, public housing projects which suffered high crime. Public areas within and around the buildings appeared to belong to no-one and offenders operated in these areas with impunity. Newman's solution was to return to the productive use of the residents the external areas beyond their individual apartments, thus creating a territorial definition of space which reflected the areas of influence of its inhabitants.

Newman has been criticised for his over-deterministic conception of space at the expense of social factors (Bottoms and Wiles 1992; Merry 1981; Smith 1987; Steventon 1996). Newman's assumption that territoriality is a universal drive has also been criticised because it fails to take account of 'fundamental differences in physical configuration, let alone the more difficult issues of the degree to which societies order space and give significance to it' (Hillier and

Hanson 1984: 6 [see also Steventon 1996 and Suttles 1972 for a critique of territoriality]). Massey (1994) endeavours to overcome spatial determinacy by seeing space as socially constituted; that is constructed out of interrelations. Places, according to Massey (1994: 121), are 'open and porous networks of social relations'. Hillier and Hanson (1984: 9) make the same point: 'Through its ordering of space the man-made (sic) physical world is already a social behaviour'.

Hillier and Hanson's (1984) analysis of the social logic of space reveals that space may have some determinacy. They suggest that 'society has a certain spatial logic' just as 'space has a certain social logic' (Hillier and Hanson 1984: 22). Massey (1994) also acknowledges that the spatial is social, but the social may also be spatial. It is worth emphasising this point because I believe that, while the social characteristics of suburbia influence its physical nature, the physical characteristics also reinforce the prevailing social conditions. Urry (1995: 64) echoes the point: 'social practices are spatially patterned, and....these patterns substantially affect these very social practices'. Moreover, while features in the suburban environment may facilitate informal social control, as Newman (1973) envisages, they may also inhibit it.

Newman's (1973) schematic model of low rise housing based on defensible space has had a significant influence on environmental crime prevention policy (see for instance Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1991; 1994; Poyner and Webb 1991). Aspects of this model, such as inward-focusing houses and enclave form, are inherent in many cul-de-sac layouts (Steventon 1996), and were apparent in some of the culs-de-sac in my study. However, enclaves are locally spatially integrated, but their relationship to the wider community is fragmented (Hillier et al 1983; Hillier and Hanson 1984). Two effects arise from this: the more locally integrated the community is spatially, the weaker

the fellowship between members in the wider community; and 'the more segregated to create local identities, by and large the more lifeless the spaces will be' (Hillier and Hanson 1984: 24). Both effects have implications for community-based informal social control.

A 'defended neighbourhood'

Enclaves are thought to encourage social cohesion and informal social control (Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994). The object of estate design based on the enclave principle is to 'create a community where people recognise the area in which they live as being collectively their neighbourhood'. As a community, 'they are alert to the intrusion of criminal or anti-social behaviour which they are ever ready to challenge' (Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994: 38).

Research has shown a link between localised solidarities which operate in some neighbourhoods and crime control (Brewer et al 1998; Foster 1995). In their study of crime management in the context of civil unrest in Belfast, Brewer et al (1998: 580) found that 'where a sense of community survives, some neighbourhoods are able to be readily mobilized to manage crime locally'. However, as two of their respondents suggested, neighbourhood solidarity appeared to result from social conditions, namely 'the troubles', although of course 'the troubles' may have exploited and focused social conditions which pre-existed. 'The troubles have acted....as a unifying force in various communities' one said. 'There have always been strong links in the community, it is due to the troubles that have kept the community together' another added (Brewer et al 1998: 582).

Physical characteristics can reinforce social cohesion and protective inclinations in residents of neighbourhoods (Suttles 1972). Suttles for example

describes the 'defended neighbourhood' in which residents define, in their cognitive maps of the area, discrete boundaries that delineate their distinction from other groups. According to Suttles, the defended neighbourhood provides a basis for social differentiation and cohesion, other than class, income or ethnicity, and becomes a manageable physical unit in terms of social control. Coniston Close in my study could be described as a defended neighbourhood. Its position at the edge of Uppenhall, bounded on two sides by a school and on its remaining sides by a railway and council estate respectively, made it geographically distinct. Residents had a strong sense of the cul-de-sac representing the bounds of 'their neighbourhood'.

Social cohesion was evident in the density of people's networks within the cul-de-sac, and the level of mutual support. 'It's a nice close' Sonia said, 'everybody's watching out for everybody'. Liz felt that people looked out for each other because they cared about each other in a neighbourly way: Her husband, Doug, agreed. 'If you take the trouble to talk to your neighbours' he said,

and have anything to do with them rather than ignore them then they'll reciprocate, they'll go and investigate why your alarm's going off.....it's all a question of....actually talking to people....actually taking the trouble to go and make conversation. Once you've talked to people they'll talk to you again, won't they?

Problems of threat and intrusion were often experienced and managed by the 'community' rather than as individuals. 'People walk down and see that they can't get out' Doug said, 'and they wander round and back out again and....it won't just be us watching them, it'll probably be several watching....at least they'll get noticed and...if somebody comes down and acts suspicious, it's even worse 'cos everybody will clock them straight away'. Sonia described an episode involving 'joyriders' who transgressed the community norms, and were dealt with by the community. 'They'd come steaming down the road' she said,

skidding round the (roundabout at the top of the close) and we were very concerned because of the children (if) they're (out) on their bikes. We all know that the children could be around so everybody always comes in here quite slowly. (So) we decided we were going to do something about it and..a couple of times we stood....round the (roundabout) and watched them and took their numbers which they didn't like and then when that didn't work we got the police....but we felt in control of that.....and it stopped.

However, informal social control in the cul-de-sac was exclusive and exclusionary, protecting vested interests by keeping out unwanted intrusion. The bounded nature of the enclave and the fact that social networks were limited to within the cul-de-sac inhibited the benefits of mutual support and informal social control in the wider community. As David pointed out, 'if there were break-ins (in the close), then....we'd...obviously see what we (could) do, how we could improve (things), but if there was a break-in (outside the close), what could we really do effectively to stop it from here?'

In culs-de-sac with little social cohesion, territorial attitudes reflected a strong sense of individual ownership and, as I describe shortly, were reflected in individual means of crime control. Linda and Paul regarded the end of their own driveway as the limit of their territory. For Pete it was the legal boundary of his plot. Martin's territory was 'just the house and the garden'. He was 'not interested' in the spaces beyond his front boundary. Neil said 'it's my garden....basically to the road, that's my territory'. Jonathan's territoriality operated to protect his own vested interests rather than for the good of the community, illustrating how the anonymity of suburbia is reflected in economic rather than social investment. Jonathan claimed to have little concern about what went on outside the boundaries of his own property unless it affected him personally. 'As long as (people) are not interfering with my fence and my property, I don't care' he said.

If they're (out) there smoking dope, having sex, drinking beer or whatever they do...carry on, I'm not interested, I can't see them. They can do what they want...it doesn't concern me, they can sit out in the

road there and play Monopoly all night....as long as they're not on my drive and....they don't start throwing their litter or anything else on my garden. I'm not a lover of gardening, I just hate picking cans and stuff up.

As the case of the renting family in Ash Close illustrated (see chapter 3), the illusion of isolation in Jonathan's statement is likely to be shattered when someone perceived as different or 'not belonging' comes to reside in the immediate locality.

'Cocooned...with six foot fences'

In chapter 5 I described how the fragmented nature of the suburban environment made some people feel isolated and afraid. Plots laid out for privacy and seclusion also affected informal social control by reducing opportunities for surveillance. Jacobs (1961) argues that surveillance is one of a range of encounter mechanisms which form part of an individual's remit of control (see also Shapland and Vagg 1988). As McConville and Shepherd (1992) note, 'watching' both usual and unusual activities in public places is the cornerstone of community crime prevention initiatives, such as Neighbourhood Watch. The heightened awareness of the local environment that watching promotes is thought to increase social cohesion, mutual dependence and shared responsibility (Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994; McConville and Shepherd 1992).

However, desires for privacy militated against surveillance and were socially fragmenting. These desires were satisfied by the layout of the estate where most plots were 'cocooned with (other) properties on three (sides) with six foot fences' (see chapter 5), and by the internal arrangement of the dwellings. Out of twenty properties visited during the research, three had living rooms and four had kitchens which faced the front with a good view of the street. The remainder either had limited views of the public domain, or main living spaces

were orientated towards the rear gardens. For example, as Joyce pointed out, 'we can't see very much because we live on the back. Unless you go into the bedroom then you don't know what's happening outside'. Linda and Paul had 'no view of the street at all'. 'We cannot see anything from here' Linda said, 'we can't see out to the front of the house. All we can see is our back garden because of the way the house (is designed)'. 'We've got conifers all round, we're enclosed' Paul added. The same applied to Norma's house. 'Anything could happen here and I wouldn't really be conscious of it' she said,

once the doors and windows are closed....because my kitchen, which is inevitably the room you spend a lot of time in, is out the back, I don't know what's....going on out there. I think also from the way the angle of this house is and the way the street goes, because our house is very much further forward than the others along this side of the road...in fact...even if you stand by the front door you can't see (much).

Norma and her husband planned their own house for privacy rather than surveillance. 'It was quite deliberate to have the living areas at the back of the house so we weren't overlooked' she said. Other properties in the street had been designed on the same principle, as Norma pointed out: 'the bungalows the other side of the road...have bedrooms at the front...(and) their kitchens and...living rooms at the back. They're not going to stand looking out the bedroom window all day so they're not going to see anything either'.

In some properties good surveillance opportunities were reduced by the addition of visual barriers. Joy thought that 'everyone is hiding behind their net curtains'. 'Every house along here has net curtains up at all the windows' she said '(and) everyone has these high walls built round their houses, or these high....trees that they've put in'. I asked her if these measures were taken for security purposes. 'I think they talk themselves into the fact that it's for security' she said,

but I think it's (for) privacy. The house we're in is on the corner..and it...does have high walls all round it which the (previous occupier) built.

They weren't there with the property originally but he first of all put in a row of half a dozen cedar trees which have grown to enormous heights because that was directly opposite the kitchen window and the wife didn't like to be standing at the kitchen window and have people walk past along the road there and see her.

The fragmented physical environment was not only a vehicle for exercising social preferences, such as desires for privacy, but it also mirrored the fragmented nature of the social world. I now examine the effects of social fragmentation on informal social control.

Social fragmentation

Brewer et al's (1998) research in Belfast describes the importance of communal structures in crime control. They found that a sense of community derived from kinship networks and neighbourliness, which provided mutual support and trust, and a strong community identity. This sense of community was often 'very localized' and 'contingent upon the frames of reference people use, the locality in which they live and personal experiences of the quality of relationships that exist in their neighbourhood' (Brewer et al 1998: 576). Nevertheless, these neighbourhood characteristics facilitated 'popular crime management by providing mechanisms of informal social control' (Brewer et al 1998: 578).

Brewer et al (1998) stress the importance of neighbourliness in the maintenance of informal social control. 'Knowing and being able to talk to your neighbour is one measure of neighbourliness' they suggest. 'So is being able to call on them in times of trouble' (Brewer et al 1998: 577). These facets of neighbouring can stimulate social cohesion and social control (Bulmer 1986). Localised support based on neighbourliness was evident in my research but generally echoed limited expectations of commitment, such as 'keeping an eye' on a neighbour's property when they were away.

The appeal of neighbourhood solidarity was evident in attitudes to Neighbourhood Watch. The benefits to the community of public spiritedness and co-operation associated with the scheme (McConville and Shepherd 1992) were acknowledged in these comments from two residents: '(Neighbourhood Watch) is for people to be made aware (of crime)' Fiona suggested 'and obviously if you are part of that scheme, that is your duty...to the community, to be aware'. 'It is supposed to get communities to work together and to be aware of problems' Sonia said, adding that 'it also makes you re-think your security'. Yet despite the greater likelihood of Neighbourhood Watch operating among home-owning, economically advantaged communities (McConville and Shepherd 1992), only one of the seven culs-de-sac involved in my study had a formal Neighbourhood Watch scheme in operation.

A variety of factors militated against Neighbourhood Watch schemes being implemented in the area ranging from a lack of time or motivation to feelings that there was little need to belong to a scheme. When participation in a scheme was considered appropriate and beneficial getting a scheme started involved effort which few were prepared to make. 'I'm a great believer' Mike said of the scheme. 'I may not be an instigator of these things but I would certainly be a participator if someone else organises'. Colin felt that he would make time to attend meetings 'if somebody else started a scheme up'. 'I would join it' he said 'I'd make time to turn up at meetings'. Lisa agreed: 'you've got to pull your weight, haven't you really?' she said, 'but then again I'm sitting here and I've done nothing about it...I've just like carried on in my own sweet way'. While Lisa lacked any real motivation to get a scheme started, Neil felt disinclined to 'go actively out' to join a scheme. Norma did not think 'it would make a great deal of difference' and Sandy felt she already carried out the watching and reporting that the scheme involved.

The lack of social commitment people made to their neighbourhood supports Sennett's (1971: 34) contention that suburban community solidarity is a myth. Sennett argues that 'images of communal solidarity are forged in order that men (sic) can avoid dealing with each other'. Martin felt that he had 'a community spirit' and would 'help anybody, any time, they've only got to ask', yet his reaction to problems in the locality was 'that's my 'box' that I live in...that's all that worries me, I'm not worried (about) what's happening out there'. Cyril's description of his neighbours as 'marvellous people....we couldn't wish for better people to live by in the area' invoked a strong image of community solidarity, yet his wife Rose encountered indifferent attitudes among them. Sennett's claim resonates with the observation that 'moral minimalism' pervades the suburb in a 'culture of avoidance' (Baumgartner 1988: 11). Geographical mobility, a low density of population, and a high degree of material independence are associated with 'avoidance and other weaker modes of social control' and are therefore 'especially middle-class phenomena' (Baumgartner 1988: 12).

Lock the doors and turn on the alarm

Social and structural changes have diminished the role of social class as an indicator of social affiliation and differentiation and partially replaced it by 'lifestyle' (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; 1996b; Chaney 1996). In this process 'people increasingly define themselves as individuals rather than in the context of group affiliations' (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a: 20). Bottoms and Wiles (1996b: 22) note: 'Lifestyles are individualistic, fluid and transitory and are available to anyone who can purchase the symbols of membership on the market' (see also Chaney 1996). The socially fragmenting effects of individualisation mean that social crises become individual crises (Beck 1992). These effects have implications for social control (Beck 1992; Bottoms and Wiles 1996a).

Giddens (1991a) argues that individualisation is part of the process of globalisation in which social relations are disembedded from local contexts and re-articulated across wide time-space distances. Massey (1994: 162) suggests that as 'the social relations which constitute a locality increasingly stretch beyond its borders; less and less of these relations are constrained within the place itself'. One consequence is the desire to establish bounded and coherent identities, 'placed identities for placeless times' as Robins (1991, quoted in Massey 1994: 162) puts it. The search for such identities is found in burgeoning exclusive localisms, such as enclaves and the 'new enclosures' (Massey 1994: 162).

The reduced importance of the locality in social relations has reinforced the emphasis for individuals on the home as a 'secure territory' (Allan and Crow 1989: 7), a 'refuge' or 'sanctuary' (Jackson 1991: 34), or a physical and psychological shelter (Dupuis and Thorns 1998; Saunders 1990a). Individualised lifestyles which focus both on the home and beyond the locale impact on informal social control in two ways: the adoption of individual security providing routines as coping mechanisms against anxiety (Giddens 1984; 1991a) from feelings of vulnerability to crime; and the transference of trust from kinship and community association, as in traditional societies, to expert and abstract systems (Giddens 1991a).

Giddens (1991a) suggests that routines and habits serve as coping mechanisms for daily life because they imply stability and provide orientation. Routines, which are a predominant form of an individual's daily social activity, are psychologically linked to the minimisation of unconscious sources of anxiety; in other words the maintenance of ontological security (Giddens 1984; 1991a [see also Bottoms 1993]). Radical disruption of routines, for instance by what Giddens terms 'critical situations', leads to fear and anxiety (Giddens 1979:

124; Farrall and Bowling 1999: 257). One facet of change in late modernity which diminishes the importance of 'place' is to undercut local habits and customs, thereby altering routines and leading to ontological insecurity (Giddens 1991a).

However, just as change in practices can lead to fear or anxiety, these emotions may lead to a change in practices. One strategy for coping with social change therefore is the adaptation of routines. Fears about the breakdown of civil society are translated into micro-contextual changes of routine or habit which either make people feel more secure, or at least allow them to rationalise their fears in the sense that they feel they have done all they can to prevent themselves becoming a victim of crime. The extent that routine activities vary will no doubt depend on a complex range of factors which include socio-spatial as well as biographical influences. This point was emphasised in Doug and Liz's observations of the different crime prevention routine practices among their neighbours in Coniston Close. 'Some (people) are laid back' Doug acknowledged. 'Some people put their alarms on when they go to bed, we don't. Some people lock their car doors, I leave the car door open'.

It's like Tom over the road, he'd leave the keys in his door all night but his neighbour's got steel shutters all on the back of the house, electric steel shutters. When they go out all the shutters come down, cover the doors totally. Maybe they got broken into in the past, maybe he's a bit paranoid but, let's face it, it's his business, if he feels insecure enough to do that then....who are we to argue with him. We never set our alarm unless we go out in the day and....(Liz) never even used to put the deadlocks up (on the door).

Liz added 'I've seen the bloke over the road....he's locking the door...he's doing the bolt at the top, he's doing the bolt at the bottom. Doug's gone to bed at night and he hasn't even locked the door....come down in the morning and his keys are sitting in his car'.

Nevertheless, Doug and Liz had changed their practices to a small extent by locking doors and using the deadlock rather than the nightlatch. '(Doug) just drummed it into me' Liz said 'and I thought ok, I better use the key. I always used to yank the door shut and that was it, I was gone, but I thought if (the deadlock's) there I ought to use it so it's took me about four and a half years but I do use it now'. Doug explained the change as a result of him becoming aware, through security consciousness in his work with a building company, of how easily the door could be opened with only the nightlatch on. What is more difficult to assess, however, is the extent to which neighbours' more extreme measures may have influenced Doug and Liz's change of behaviour by inducing subtle insecurities about the dangers of the outside world (Loader 1999).

The changes in routines in and around the home described above all involve the use of security devices. The growth of consumerism, and the commodification of security evident from the burgeoning security market, has seen an increased reliance on security hardware rather than other individuals in the locality as a means of controlling crime (Loader 1999). As Loader (1999: 385) points out, 'the more consumer culture comes to dominate in this field of provision, the less human safety will be seen as arising from the 'thickness' of social bonds and the quality of our association with others'. I argue, therefore, that in the context of my research the emphasis had shifted from informal social control to crime control.

In traditional societies group affiliations, such as kinship and local communities, represent sources of trust (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b). The sense of community and feelings of trust which Brewer et al (1998) found in their research in Belfast related to extended family kinship patterns. They suggest that kinship networks reinforce 'a sense of localism and shared identity' as well

as ‘the sense of cohesiveness which people associate with ideas of community’ (Brewer et al 1998: 578). With individualisation and social fragmentation sources of trust are increasingly placed in individuals, such as intimates, or based on abstract systems (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b; Giddens 1991a). Lisa did not seek support from her neighbours, instead preferring to rely on her parents who lived in the neighbouring cul-de-sac. ‘I wouldn’t have a neighbour in’ she said.

I can trust my friends, I can trust my family...but I wouldn’t like to think somebody’s coming in and going through my cupboards and drawers and things and I know that sounds awful because probably a friend could do that. I mean my Mum comes in and goes upstairs and looks in all the bedrooms and I’m saying have you had a good look?...but....I feel more secure with my family. My sister’s got a key, my father’s got a key....and my friend Cloe, she’s my close friend so I feel alright about leaving the key.

If, as Abrams (Bulmer 1986) suggests, neighbouring, is a balance of costs and benefits, then Lisa’s fear of her neighbours’ intrusion into her privacy outweighed the benefits she felt they could offer in support since her parents’ proximity enabled them to fulfill that role.

Neil and Cathy’s limited social connections in the cul-de-sac or on the estate, combined with their busy lifestyle away from home, meant they knew few of their neighbours and felt uncertain about who they could trust if they needed help. Although their families lived some distance away in another city, they preferred to depend on their parents for support rather than neighbours. ‘Because we don’t have a lot to do with the other (neighbours)’ Cathy pointed out, ‘I suppose if....you were in danger and you needed help, you’d have to ask’. ‘You’d ring your dad’ Neil said. ‘Yeah’ Cathy responded ‘but I’d like to feel that if I did ask the neighbours for something then I’d get the support’.

As Neil and Cathy's example shows, busy lives of work and leisure outside the residential neighbourhood left little time for interaction in the locality and, as I discussed in chapter 5, this resulted in isolation for some people who were frequently confined to the area. Since so much activity occurred away from the estate there was also an absence of 'capable guardianship' which is thought to be an important element in the control of crime (Cohen and Felson 1979). However, as I discuss shortly, the lack of guardianship did not result in increased crime and this may be explained both by the spatial patterning of crime in which offenders do not routinely access affluent suburban areas (Brantingham and Brantingham 1984; 2000), and the effects of structural controls which inhibit the development of a community crime career within the locality (Bottoms and Wiles 1986). Nevertheless, the fact that people were routinely absent from the estate for long periods, combined with their fears about crime which I highlighted in chapter 5, meant that they invested in security measures to alleviate their insecurities.

Seventy five per cent of the households in my study had a security alarm. Loader (1999: 380) argues that the commodification of security can be understood in terms of the spread of consumer culture where 'commodities operate as a means of expressing identity and signifying one's place within prevailing social hierarchies' (see also Chaney 1996). Thus, the prominent display of alarm boxes in the culs-de-sac of Uppenhall may have had a dual function: a warning to would-be intruders, and badges which signified attempts to 'create affinities with some groups', namely fellow residents, 'and place symbolic distance between themselves and others' (Loader 1999: 380). Loader (1999: 381) also suggests that the appeal of the security market lies in the fact that 'it offers its various consumers....some semblance of control over an otherwise unpredictable and troubling future'. Spitzer (1987), however,

suggests that the acquisition of security as a commodity simply enhances fear and this appeared to be borne out among some of those in my study.

Of all the people interviewed, David and Karen mentioned their security arrangements most frequently and in greatest detail. According to David, the system in his house was very sophisticated, reflecting his knowledge of security technology which came from working for a security firm. His wife Karen had a civilian post in the police, and so they were both 'part of (a) culture and environment of crime', as David put it. 'It's part of my daily life' he continued:

I deal with break-ins. I can see the misery it brings not only from...the disruption caused, it's the emotions it causes so you've got the physical break-in and the psychological emotions that follow that, the trauma...and when it's something personal like your own house....as far as I'm concerned I will do what I have to do to make this place as secure as I can with what I can afford.

The levels of crime they witnessed as part of their working lives became translated into insecurity in their home environment, even though none of the houses in the close had been broken into and David and Karen had not been personally victimised in their current or previous locations. The fact that they had open space which was accessible to strangers next to their house made them feel vulnerable in the spatial context of where they lived 'at the edge' of the close.

David used technology to put a 'protective cocoon' (Giddens 1991a: 3) around his home and family. His knowledge of the security hardware available facilitated upgrading the existing level of provision. 'The alarm wiring was already in the house' he explained,

and I had the company...where I work come and fit the passive (sensors), extra passives in the garage and there's also a panic alarm up in the bedroom, so not only is the house (audibly) alarmed....it also goes to a monitoring station with a panic alarm as well. That gave Karen peace of mind at nights when, at that time, I was working shifts. It gave

me peace of mind thinking well, I can be at work....knowing that the house, when she goes to bed.....is totally alarmed, literally every door...there's one in every room....in the garage, everything so...to be honest, nothing could move down here without triggering the alarm so that's peace of mind for both of us really.

The zeal with which David spoke of the improvements he had made to their property supports Loader's (1999: 381) suggestion that 'security may have as much to do with pleasure as with anxiety'. I argue that it also indicates a case of security for security's sake, rather than need. This was evident in the way David talked about the difficulties he had created for anyone wishing to break in and remove heavy items from the house. 'If they come in and took the telly' he argued,

the fence was six foot high.....and I've extended it to seven foot high. It's got *Pyracantha* growing all round the side of it. Down the side here if you were actually in the school field it's seven foot to get over it and then you've got to get into the house. That telly, I'm not a weakling but...I wouldn't fancy trying to climb over the fence with a telly or video. You're not going to get very far and...plus the fact as soon as you activate this alarm you'd know it. I forget what decibel the alarm is but...it's really loud.

Loader (1999: 382 - italics in original) asks 'to what extent does the *commodification* of security contribute to a (potentially insatiable) 'ratcheting-up' in the level and kinds of goods and services that consumers believe are required to defend themselves?' David's future plans perhaps provide an answer. 'The next thing I was thinking of' he said 'was putting a couple of cameras...on the corners of the property as well because they're coming down quite cheap now'.

Structural, cultural and ideological controls

So far in this chapter I have described a physical and social context which militated against 'active' processes of informal social control. Both social and physical environments were fragmented. Atomisation, individuation and limited social networks reduced social cohesion and inhibited wider support

networks in the community. Busy lifestyles took people away from the estate, often leaving few people behind to monitor the public realm. As one elderly resident in Coniston Close said when asked about crime prevention in the cul-de-sac, 'I am the crime prevention'. Localised solidarities combined with enclave-like micro-environments to form defensive groups, or people took individual steps to attempt to ease their anxieties about crime by changing, or reinforcing, security routines, and putting their trust in security devices and insurance. If informal social control is important in preventing (Foster 1995), or managing (Brewer et al 1998), crime, then why were crime rates in Uppenhall low?

In routine activities theory, Cohen and Felson (1979) suggest that three elements need to converge in time and space for crime to occur: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardians. The affluent properties and associated trappings of consumer society in Uppenhall certainly made suitable targets, especially with predictable routines taking people away from the estate for long time periods. Whether security devices reduced the suitability of the target is not clear. Research has shown that alarms do not necessarily deter offenders, particularly where the offence is opportunistic (Cromwell et al 1991; Maguire and Bennett 1982), or the offender does not act as a rational calculating actor (Foster 1990). In terms of the motivated offender, as discussed previously (see chapter 3), most recorded offences in the area were committed by offenders from outside the locality which suggests an absence of pressures for crime to develop within the community. I now want to explore the processes which inhibit crime from flourishing in the area.

Structural, cultural and ideological controls may be defined as processes which maintain conformity or compliance with the norms, values and standards of the culture or community (Jacobs 1961; Shapland and Vagg 1988). Bursik and

Grasmick (1993) suggest that there are different levels of influence on individuals: the family and close friends; the neighbourhood; and external agencies and the wider community. Much academic and political interest has focused at the family level (see for instance Berger 1993). A lack of parental control (Felson 1994; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) and family breakdown (Carlson 1993; Dennis 1993; Farrington 1997; Sampson 1986; Schuerman and Kobrin 1986) are implicated in rising crime rates. As Stenson and Brearley (1991: 228) point out, 'the attempt to create a state-directed moral census ...extends to the familiar claims that much criminal and other forms of anti-social behaviour have their origins in the collapse of stable family life and the moral authority and clear patterns of socialisation that go with it'.

Early socialisation is seen as crucial in the development of social bonds (Hirschi 1969) and self-control in young children (Felson 1994; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Hirschi (1969) identifies four elements of social bonding: attachment; commitment; involvement; and belief. Attachment to others arouses a sensitivity to their needs, wishes and expectations. Felson (1994) suggests that strong attachments to parents and family result in greater disgrace in deviancy. Conversely, '*detachment provides the freedom to deviate*' (Hagan 1987: 165 italics in original). Commitment is the investment of time in achieving longer term goals, such as education, and the avoidance of acts which threaten future prospects (Felson 1994). Involvement in non-criminal pursuits leaves little time for crime. Finally, belief in society's values and norms is likely to promote conformity (Hirschi 1969).

The focus on the family, however, should not neglect the social control potential of the community (Bottoms 1993). For example, where the social norms of the community do not favour criminality, they tend to be 'transmitted to offspring and reinforced in various ways within the life of the community'

(Bottoms and Wiles 1986: 126). Community-situated constraints on individual behaviour are evident in Japanese society (Komiya 1999). Before I examine the controls which operated in Uppenhall, I want to focus on socialisation in the case of two young women who participated in my research. While their account is very individualised and not particularly generalisable, it nevertheless raises a number of interesting issues concerning young middle-class attitudes to crime and conformity, and how these fit with stereotypical middle-class notions of crime.

Sarah and Vicky

Sarah lived with her grandparents (Jenny and Mike) in a large bungalow at the end of a private access off Poplar Drive. She was a confident, outspoken young woman, at times displaying a maturity that belied her fourteen years. At others she resorted to fits of giggles and flippancy answers to my questions, reminding me that she was not yet an adult but no longer a child (Oswell 1998). Vicky was a year older than Sarah and was altogether more reserved and thoughtful. She lived with her parents in a large detached house in a nearby cul-de-sac. Both teenagers enjoyed an affluent home life and both attended on a day basis a private school of good repute in a neighbouring city.

‘We’re kinda streetwise’

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) dismiss any link between peer group pressure and delinquency. They suggest that people seek the company of others similar to themselves and ‘concern for the opinion of peers (‘peer pressure’)... promotes conformity’ (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990: 158). Sarah and Vicky liked to hang around in the local park with other youths because it gave them some insight into a world of which they would otherwise have had little direct experience given their home and school life. ‘We know what it’s like in the

outside world' Sarah pointed out, contrasting herself and Vicky with some of the other girls at the school who 'don't go out a lot':

If we didn't go out, if we just came round each other's houses and just stayed in and watched telly and just listened to what (the school) had to say, which is what some people do and I'm not knocking that, they enjoy it, that's fine but.....the real world isn't (the school). It's very protected (at school). We know what's going on....we're kinda streetwise really.

Sarah's grandparents were not keen on her going out on her own because they were afraid she may be subjected to adverse influences which might weaken their control, or land her in trouble. 'They do my head in a lot about going out and stuff because they're really old fashioned about it' Sarah said. 'They don't want me down the park with loads of people on my own and I didn't see the harm in it really because....we weren't really going to get up to much'. In fact, the sorts of influence at large in the park were what Sarah's grandparents no doubt worried about. For instance drugs were readily available. 'There's always tablets down there' Sarah explained,

and if you want any draw (cannabis) you go down there straight away because they are the people to go to....and then, you can get anything, you can get Es (ecstasy), you can get acid (LSD), you can get powder (heroin), speed (amphetamines).....oh yeah, if you just walked up to somebody round here and said "where can I get drugs?" they'd point you in the right direction. I could walk out of this house now and get them in five minutes.

Despite the conventional deviant stereotype of drug users, research suggests the opposite (Perri 6 et al 1997). Perri 6 et al (1997: 7) argue that 'drug use is part of general lifestyle experimentation, characteristic of adolescence'. As part of mainstream youth culture drugs use transcends class, and its normalisation is such that those who refrain are seen as the deviants (Parker et al 1995). Sarah's description of drugs use among adolescents in Uppenhall was more of a 'pick'n'mix scene' (Parker et al 1995: 24) which was more leisure-centred and consumer-orientated than criminal (Aldridge et al 1999; Parker et al 1995; Perri 6 et al 1997).

Being streetwise, however, also meant that Sarah and Vicky came into contact with other types of crime. While occasionally crimes were committed for economic reasons (Farrington 1997), more often they were hedonistic in nature (Farrington 1997), such as the excitement gained by taking risks (Maguire and Bennett 1982). 'I went into town with that Oak Tree lot and so I know about (shoplifting) very very well' Sarah said, mentioning one crime to which women make a significant contribution (Heidensohn 1996). 'We were just (hanging around) and Ginny said "oh, I fancy some Polos" and I said "you haven't got any money" and she said "so" and they all just sat there...stuffing their coats full of these chocolate bars'. According to Sarah the male youths in their social group also indulged in opportunistic car crime (Clarke 1995) in the car park of the local shops:

(The lads are) always checking car doors, not to steal the car but to steal the radio and to see if they've got fags in the glove compartment or whatever...or money. Craig and Steve....saw this van....it had.....drink in it and nobody had tried that so they had to get that and then....they . thought there was some money in there but that was it....and they tried to get the radio....but they couldn't get it out.

Sarah maintained that crime was a regular part of life for some members of the social group in the park. Sarah and Vicky therefore had to resolve the conflict between the values associated with their affluent home and school life, which taught them that crime and drugs use were bad, and the influences of their peers for whom such behaviours were accepted practice.

'Honour among thieves'

Conflicting values for Sarah and Vicky were resolved by condoning, or neutralizing the effect (Matza 1964; Sykes and Matza 1957) of certain criminal activities, for instance petty theft and shoplifting. 'Shops can more or less expect it basically' Sarah said. 'There was all these girls stuffing chocolate bars down their tops and I was just laughing my head off'. The acceptability of the crime depended on Sarah and Vicky's judgement of its triviality or severity,

ranging from 'little things like shoplifting to big things like murders', and the nature of the victim. Research into teenage attitudes and experience of crime has shown that the most frequently committed crimes, of which shoplifting figured, were those thought to be the least serious (Hartless et al 1995).

Sarah considered shoplifting and petty theft particularly trivial when the value of the item was small. '(One boy) got expelled for stealing a can of Coke from school' Sarah said, 'that's pathetic....so what, it's just a can of Coke. I know it's the principle that they were worried about but what can you steal from school?... a pencil, or an exercise book'. Crimes where victimization was more diffuse were also considered acceptable by denial of injury (Sykes and Matza 1957). For example, Vicky said 'I don't think crime's as bad when it's not involved with people....anything to do with cars and everything'.

While Sarah and Vicky were witness to criminal acts, they claimed not to commit any themselves, which suggests an underlying belief in conformity (Hirschi 1969). Sarah argued for example: 'I do pay for my Polos....I buy them all the time and I've never stolen a packet of Polos in my life'. I can only accept the validity of her statement at face value, though it is possible that she altered her performance (Goffman 1959; 1971; Barnes et al 2000) to suit her expectations of what I, as a middle-class researcher, wanted to hear (her performance when with her peers may have been completely different). Sarah and Vicky did admit to collusion in crime by supporting friends who were committing crime. 'I wouldn't (stand) there in Woolworths and (shout) "look at these girls, they're shoplifting' Sarah said. 'You don't really go round and say that. I suppose it is honour among thieves really because you don't say anything about your friends like that'. As Tyler (1990: 3) argues, even among law-abiding people 'compliance is never complete....everyone breaks the law sometimes'.

Playing the game

Tyler (1990) emphasises the importance of normative, as opposed to instrumental, processes in why people obey the law. Compliance tends to be linked to instrumental reasons, such as deterrents, or the likelihood of getting caught. Conformity comes from normative processes which stress morality and legitimacy, where the law is seen as just and correct. Normative processes come from early socialisation in which social values about what is right and proper become more important than the self-interest view of compliance (Tyler 1990). Sarah and Vicky had to manage two different sets of values: those of their family and school life, and those of their peers and the youth culture to which they aspired. They were, as Matza (1964: 28) puts it, 'in a limbo between convention and crime, responding in turn to the demands of each, flirting now with one, now the other, but postponing commitment, evading decision'.

It could be argued, as Hirschi (1969) suggests, that Sarah and Vicky's attachment to significant others and a belief in the system which offered them a 'stake in conformity' (Hagan 1987: 167-68) kept them from getting actively involved in crime. Certainly, women are more likely to conform to social norms than men because of the way social bonds, and sanctions such as stigma and ill-repute, are more effectively applied to them than men (Heidensohn 1996; 1997). Another influence may be the fact that women who commit crime are 'doubly punished' because they are seen to have transgressed both social and gender norms (Heidensohn 1997).

Even if Sarah and Vicky's actions stopped short of crime, their attitude to crime, which stemmed from a social life outside the immediate scrutiny of parents and school, did not conform to the norms of the system which encompassed their home and school life, but challenged the values and beliefs

of that system. According to Farrington (1997), a strong conscience or a belief that offending is wrong tends to coincide with parents' favour of legal norms. Sarah's attitude to crime may have stemmed from her perception that her mother took a relaxed attitude to crime. When asked what her mother's reaction would be if she was caught offending Sarah replied 'Mom would laugh, I know she would. She'd just think it was amusing'. She explained the reason for this belief:

My brother gets suspended like every week ...(Mom) just laughs....but my Grandma goes "Carl's been suspended again, I can't believe it". I said "what's he done this time?". She said "he threatened a boy with a plastic knife". I just laughed, I couldn't control myself. She said "it's not funny". I said "it is though" and then I rang Mom up and Mom was just like wetting herself cos she thought it was funny.

Sarah did not explain the reason for her mother's attitude, but her influence on Sarah was counter-balanced by Sarah's grandparents who were her custodians. It is likely that Sarah and Vicky's attitude to crime stemmed more from the fact that they were going through a rebellious phase in their transition to adulthood, when the resistance of socialising influences coupled with demands for their own terms to be accommodated are common among adolescents (Rudd 1997).

Furthermore, while the internalisation of values and beliefs through socialisation is largely a structural process in which individuals may be hardly aware of the forces enveloping them, it is through agency that individuals learn to negotiate ways of working the system to their own advantage. Indeed, as Matza (1964: 60) argues 'norms may be violated without surrendering allegiance to them'. Thus, during school terms Sarah and Vicky stopped 'hanging out' in the park, not only because of the school's demands on their time (Hirschi 1969), but also because of the rewards (Akers 1977; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), or their expectations of their rights (Marks 1997), which came from 'being prepared to play the game' (Bourdieu 1993: 72). Playing the game involved compliance (Abrams 1992; Tyler 1990) with the norms and

values of parents, grandparents and the school in order to safeguard their prospects of a future career. 'We've already decided, we're going to Sheffield (University)' Vicky pointed out:

We've started doing home ec(onomics) for GCSE and it's...really good, we both really enjoy it and...as it happens it's what we both want to do. There's loads of fields you can go into afterwards.....hotel and catering management, you can cook, you can manage a small business, you can own a hotel....you can do what you want really.

Playing the game also meant knowing how to work the system to their advantage when 'down the park' with their peers. Just as the young men in Paul Willis's (1977) *Learning to Labour* knew how to manipulate school rules, or how far they could push school staff, 'street' knowledge taught Sarah and Vicky the risks of becoming involved in crime and how far they could push the system of sanctions (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) before threatening their future. 'If I got caught stealing a packet of Polos and they called the police' Sarah explained,

first time (the police would) tell my grandparents, the second time I did it I'd probably get a caution, third time I did it I'd probably get community service. None of this would be on my record. They wouldn't put anything on until about the fourth time where they might actually consider putting me in a detention centre when that would go on my record but say I was eighteen then that would be like....quick on the record. I know the consequences.

The repercussions at home of being involved in crime were effective sanctions, stressing the importance of attachment to parents (Felson 1994; Hirschi 1969). 'They'd go absolutely mad' Vicky said, describing the expected reaction from her parents. Sarah agreed, 'I'd never hear the end of it'.

Community controls

In structuration theory 'rules and resources are the properties of communities and collectivities' (Bryant and Jary 2000: 677). Although, as Giddens (1984) points out, rules and resources enable and constrain, group rules or norms are

thought to be of considerable importance in constraining individual action (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b). In Japanese culture for example low crime is attributed to strong community controls (Komiya 1999; Kondo 1990; Thornton and Endo 1992). Komiya (1999) argues that the relationship of the individual and community in Japanese social structure is important in maintaining conformity with group rules of conduct. Group life in Japan is 'formed on the basis of locality and not on personal attributes' which means that the group 'cannot rely on common values and ethics to give it strength because its members' personal attributes are heterogeneous' (Komiya 1999: 379). Thus there is a need to 'develop instruments by which the inherent instability of heterogeneous membership is overcome in order that members with different personal attributes are firmly bound to one another' (Komiya 1999: 379). These 'instruments' take the form of 'a great number of detailed rules of conduct' which are repressive and inhibit individual expression (Komiya 1999: 379).

Because 'individual consciousness is not firmly established', this creates a sense of dependence since the 'individual's freedom is weak' and therefore 'the group can easily influence the individual member's behaviour' (Komiya 1999: 376). Membership of the group also provides ontological security in return for compliance with group rules. Japanese 'tolerate strong informal social control because in return they are supported and cared for by the...group' (Komiya 1999: 381). Failure to comply, however, means exclusion from the group and loss of ontological security. Moreover, 'leaving the group means a great loss of private social capital' including loss of status and future prospects (Komiya 1999: 384).

As Komiya acknowledges, Western culture differs from Japanese culture and I do not seek to make comparisons, merely to stress the importance of group controls. In Western culture by contrast with Japanese social life, individual

freedom is paramount over people's relationship with their community (Komiya 1999), yet people who wish to live in suburbia prefer homogeneity (Suttles 1972) and similarity (Chambers 1997). Based on affluence people are bound together by similar desires, dislikes and goals (Sennett 1971) and traditional values are collectively consolidated as universal and constant ideals (Chambers 1997).

Traditional values form the basis of 'cultural ideals' and 'utopian aspirations' (Chaney 1997: 142), wrapped up in the notion of wholesome family life (Chambers 1997). The dreams of the suburban dweller include: a good place to live between city and country; to own and control one's property; to have freedom of movement; to cherish privacy (Krieger 1991). Communal integration in these suburban values promotes powerful expectations of conformity with norms; the need to keep up appearances (Chaney 1997). Thus the preservation of the particular character of suburban culture is tied up in the ordinary rhythms and routines of everyday suburban life (Silverstone 1997).

Taylor et al (1996: 15) note the middle class interest in 'lifestyle' and 'the quality of life'. These desires were expressed in my study for example by David and Karen's search for 'peace and tranquillity'. Lifestyles are cultural affiliations that create a form of social identity, embodying attitudes, values and tastes which are all imbued with moral seriousness (Chaney 1996). This social identity establishes boundaries within which people are assessed (Suttles 1972). Tastes become responsibilities by which people are judged by others: 'ways of living that flesh out the general contours of class distinction' (Chaney 1996: 12). Lifestyles are therefore 'patterns of action that differentiate people' (Chaney 1996: 4) with an enhanced focus of concern on outside intrusion (Suttles 1972). These aspects of suburban life, rooted in the particularities of the suburban environment, illustrate a 'geography of difference' where

exclusive means exclusion and seclusion and differences between high and low income groups are reinforced (Massey 1995: 339).

Nowhere is social differentiation more apparent than in the exclusive and exclusionary nature of the housing market (Harloe et al 1992). As home ownership has become less class specific (Saunders 1990a; Hamnett 1995) what is owned has become more important (Hamnett 1995). Property remains a crucial social and cultural marker in a system where social status is reflected in house values and the middle class still dominate the desirable areas of home ownership (Hamnett 1995). Furthermore, 'owner-occupation depends on the kind of financial rectitude that is usually associated with industrious and dominant social lifestyles' rather than crime (Bottoms and Wiles 1986: 119). The domination of the private housing market by the financial institutions with their own regulatory powers is also a type of social control (Bottoms and Wiles 1986; Farrar 1997). Indeed, as Bottoms and Wiles (1986: 119) point out, 'there are few more powerful definers of social normality than the building societies'.

Thus, the housing market polarises the divisions between owners and non-owners (Saunders 1990a) and filters out the socially marginal (Bottoms and Wiles 1986). As I argued in chapter 1, capital or economic disinvestment in communities not only results in exclusion from mainstream social life and undermines social capital, but can lead to 'recapitalization' in other directions, such as crime and a diminution of local informal social control (Pitts and Hope 1998: 41). Collective vested interests ensure this is unlikely to happen in suburbia.

Conclusion

Baumgartner (1988) highlighted a paradox of simultaneous order and disorganisation in her American suburb. I have identified a similar paradox,

that of a 'community' which was socially fragmented yet culturally cohesive. Social and physical fragmentation, individualisation, desires for privacy and busy lifestyles impacted on 'active' informal social control yet crime rates remained low. My research highlights not only the extreme complexity of informal social control, but also the fact that it operates in very subtle, as well as obvious, ways; and not necessarily ways envisaged by many community crime prevention strategies. Strong social identity, norms, values, beliefs and individual and collective vested interests may assume greater importance in the control of crime in low crime areas than the actions of residents.

The fact that low crime in Uppenhall had less to do with the pursuits of 'active citizens' envisaged by community crime prevention policies, such as Neighbourhood Watch (McConville and Shepherd 1992), and more to do with structural processes of affluence, status and property ownership, aided by factors such as the housing market (Bottoms and Wiles 1986; Farrar 1997), meant of course that crime control in Uppenhall was exclusive and exclusionary. It was based on shared values arising from materialism, rather than shared material need (Sennett 1971). It was also based on a 'community' in which social identity and conformity were reinforced by a fear of difference, as earlier chapters have argued, and, at the same time, a fear of being different (Seidler 1997). Some commentators forecast a bleak future for society if crime control becomes extreme, exclusionary, and totally individualised and privatised (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b; France and Wiles 1998; Girling et al 2000; Johnston 1991; Reiner and Cross 1991). In my concluding chapter I explore how far my study supports this trend and I examine two alternatives which claim to offer a more equitable future.

Chapter 7

Balaclavas and baseball bats?
Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter I summarise the issues discussed in the preceding chapters. The implications of the research are considered at both a theoretical and practical level: in terms of the conceptual development of both fear and informal social control, and how these impact on community crime prevention strategies. Areas for further research are also suggested. This study has particular relevance for crime prevention policymakers and practitioners since it challenges many of the assumptions that currently underpin environmental crime prevention policy and highlights issues which are important in the control of crime in housing areas.

The chapter also discusses the future of crime control in affluent settings dominated by privatised and individualised social worlds which perpetuate social divisions. Some commentators have outlined a trend among the affluent towards private, defensive and exclusive forms of crime prevention, such as defended locales (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; 1996b) and gated communities (Davis 1990). A potentially bleak future for civil society has been forecast if these trends accelerate (Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; 1996b; Girling et al 2000). Despite evidence of a more democratic and humanitarian response to crime and society's ills among some affluent groups (Girling et al 2000; Loader 1999), my research highlighted desires for the kind of privatised security that Bottoms and Wiles (1996a; 1996b) describe. However, insufficient organisation and consensus, and the conflict of individual vested interests, mediated the 'collective efficacy' (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999: 603) necessary to enact more extreme means of crime control, such as 'gating' or group vigilantism.

I conclude by considering some broader debates which suggest possibilities for combating the social divisions and inequities that I have identified through my research into the suburban way of life. Communitarianism, for example,

attempts to balance individualism with a sense of social responsibility (Etzioni 1993). However, communitarianism has been criticised because it emphasises shared values and reinforces identity rather than confronts difference (Bauman 2000; Sennett 1998; Young 1999), thus reinforcing the status quo. An environmental approach might advocate the adoption of spatial configurations that are less exclusive and exclusionary, such as permeable public realms which allow access for all (Bentley et al 1985). In some circumstances the removal of barriers in the built environment may allow crime penetration and displacement from other areas (Brantingham and Brantingham 2000).

Moreover, there would be a need to overcome the powerful structural effects of the property market which influence people's preferences and dictate the nature of estate design. Global forces may induce change; for instance global environmental strategies impact on localities through national policies which will influence the way land is developed in the future. Land use policies which require higher densities on urban brownfield sites may yet prove a challenge to suburban growth. Whether this is likely to promote tolerance of the diversity characteristic of many urban areas (see for instance Massey 1994) remains to be seen.

Suburban paradox

Baumgartner's (1988) study of an affluent American suburb highlighted the paradoxical nature of affluent suburban life: weak social control yet the absence of conflict; lack of social cohesion but freedom from strife; concurrent disorganisation and orderliness; high levels of fear in the context of low crime. My study of an affluent English suburb also revealed a paradox: socio-spatial dynamics which on the one hand increased fear of crime, but on the other, contained crime. Apart from some extremely localised and superficial solidarities, a socially and spatially fragmented and atomised 'community'

existed in which limited and loose-knit local social networks, strong desires for privacy, and busy lifestyles prevailed. However, a strong collective identity rooted in a bounded sense of place gave a sense of security from the troubled world outside but also heightened fear of difference. Crime was perceived in terms of predation by outsiders to the locality which threatened peace and tranquillity in the suburb, the exclusive image of the area and economic investment.

Despite high fears crime rates were low. Rather than resulting from actual victimisation, fears arose from a complex interplay of wider societal influences, individual biographies and the local context in which crime was made visible by myth and rumour, and the media focus on crime. These factors created both diffuse and generalised as well as specific micro-locational anxieties and fears. Yet a certain amount of fear could have a positive influence, generating an awareness of risk which enhanced crime control, rather than enforcing a withdrawal from normal daily routines. However, the social dynamics of the suburb meant that crime control was rarely based on community action and the pursuits of 'active citizens' envisaged by community crime prevention policies. Instead crime control was individualistic and reliant on sophisticated target hardening. The importance of affluence, status and property ownership were emphasised, but these created an exclusive and exclusionary community of vested interest, common identity and shared values.

Implications for community crime prevention

My research challenges many of the assumptions relating to community life, fear of crime and informal social control that underpin crime prevention theory and practice. The emphasis on design in crime prevention schemes based on defensible space, such as 'Secured by Design', neglects the importance of context highlighted by my research. Where a place is and who lives there have

an important impact on levels of crime. The design and appearance of an estate may be only one of a range of influences which determine who *wants* to live there, thereby having consequences for local morale and informal social control (see for instance Bottoms and Wiles 1986; Foster 1995).

Many crime prevention strategies are based on unsubstantiated theoretical assumptions about human behaviour from which a set of universal guidelines for best practice are applied without proper evaluation (Cozens et al 1999; Hillier and Shu 1999; Steventon 1996). Defensible space theory (Newman 1973), for example, places great emphasis on the environment's role in determining individual and collective behaviour. While I have acknowledged that there may be some spatial determinacy (see chapter 6), spaces tend to be established to satisfy social ends. Manipulation of the environment is unlikely to have more than a marginal effect on wider social structural forces, such as individualism, which impact on local communities (see chapter 1). Estate design which satisfies desires for privacy and the exclusion of strangers may also be isolating and increase fears.

Social cohesion is thought to be important for creating a sense of 'community' and precipitating informal social control (see for instance Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994). However, strong cohesive communities can support criminal networks and subcultures and their own local informal controls (Smith 1999; Young 1999) as other research has indicated (eg. Evans, Fraser and Walklate 1996; Foster 1990). I have argued that neighbourhoods based on solidarity and social cohesion were a rarity, if not a myth. Certainly the affluent middle classes have long tended to lead atomised, rather than cohesive, lifestyles. However, my research has shown that notions of 'community' and social solidarity may be extremely localised and the meanings people attach to them very individual.

These factors impact on schemes, such as Neighbourhood Watch, which are thought to increase social cohesion (McConville and Shepherd 1992). One of the main criticisms of voluntaristic schemes, such as Neighbourhood Watch, is that the uptake is higher in affluent low crime areas which have less need of them and less in high crime areas where need is greater (Bennett 1990; McConville and Shepherd 1992). However, while the idea of Neighbourhood Watch appealed to some interviewees in my study, few schemes operated in the locality because of lifestyles, or insufficient motivation to get involved or co-ordinate a scheme. Processes of watching, monitoring and reporting may be important in controlling crime (Jacobs 1961; Shapland and Vagg 1988), but to varying degrees according to local circumstances of need, and not necessarily in the formalised manner of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

My study supports Hillier and Shu's (1999) work on spatial integration. As I discussed in chapter 2, Hillier and Shu argue that linear integrated spaces with some through movement and good intervisibility of dwellings are safer from crime than visually fragmented spaces which offer little potential for movement. However, my study emphasises more the importance of Hillier and Shu's research for fear of crime. Enclaves which provide privacy and restrict through access may contribute to the fear of crime and feelings of vulnerability that can arise from loss of contact with neighbours and passers-by, as the Joyce and Jenny case studies in chapter 5 revealed.

Joyce and Jenny felt trapped because their location at the end of the cul-de-sac meant they had 'nowhere to run' in the event of trouble. Being unable to see other people left them feeling cut-off from the outside world and reinforced a sense of isolation. However, Joyce and Jenny's husbands felt safe because in their view strangers had no reason to approach their properties. Taylor et al (1996) observed similar gender differences in relation to perceptions of public

space in Manchester and Sheffield. They noted how at night the city centres were used mainly by men but avoided by women out of fear for personal safety. Yet the ways in which certain places influenced women's avoidance were not apparent amongst the men. Taylor et al (1996: 226) argue that these different perceptions arise in the context of 'irredeemably male-dominated local power structures'. As I pointed out in chapter 5, the formulation and application of policy by men may not adequately address issues which lead to greater fear in the environment for women.

The link between fear and reduced informal social control (Skogan 1986; Wilson and Kelling 1982) is far from clear. Fear is assumed to arise as a rational response to causes in the environment, such as social and physical cues of neglect or decline in the neighbourhood (Wilson and Kelling 1982). The policy response in some areas has been the application of so-called 'zero tolerance' policing measures (Bratton 1997; Dennis and Mallon 1997). This more uncompromising style of policing has been criticised for being more about law and order rhetoric than reality; 'short-term' and 'quick fix', often targetting the innocent because they are different, rather than a 'comprehensive and holistic approach that pairs law enforcement with more prevention and intervention programmes' involving communities (Pollard 1997: 44).

My study highlights the complexity of fear both in terms of cause and effect. Basing a policy of draconian policing on a narrow view of fear not only risks disrupting subtle informal social controls which may exist, but also ignores other factors which lead to fear. A reconceptualisation of fear (see chapter 5) recognises its capacity to both promote and inhibit informal social control. The challenge for policy is to harness the motivating aspects of fear and encourage communities to take part in the management of crime. The financial and human resources consumed by zero tolerance policing may be better invested in

mobilising local institutions and social relations among individuals at a local level in areas which lack the power to resist pressures towards crime in the community (Hope 1995; Pitts and Hope 1998).

Overall my research emphasises the need for policy to be directed towards a greater understanding of problems which occur in particular localities, often at very localised levels. Policies based on theories underpinned by universal principles which are targetted across the whole social spectrum, rather than being tailored to individual localities according to circumstances and need, are not only an inefficient use of resources, but may also fail to live up to expectations, as Neighbourhood Watch illustrates (McConville and Shepherd 1992). Certainly these policies should be subjected to thorough and unbiased evaluation.

The future of crime control

Gerald Suttles (1972) argues that, because the suburbs lack their own institutions, they rely on allies in the wider community, such as the police, for security and support. Suttles concludes that changes in the posture of allies creates panic in suburban communities and results in vigilantism and self-protectionism. Johnston (1991: 36) makes a similar point: 'the traditional liberal view of citizenship is one where the citizen is a passive bearer of rights. But where the state is unable or unwilling to meet expressed demands for services, active citizenship is likely to increase'. At the time of writing an incident reported in the national press concerning an act of 'spontaneous vigilantism' (Johnston 1996: 222) rather forebodingly echoed the sentiment of those commentators' remarks. A fifty five year old farmer was convicted of the murder of a sixteen year old youth and the wounding of an older man, both of whom had broken into his home with the intent to steal.

According to press reports the farmer, Tony Martin, lived alone in a remote and rundown farmhouse in Emneth, West Norfolk, where he claimed to have suffered repeated burglaries over a number of years. On this occasion, the two intruders, who had travelled some seventy miles from Newark in Nottinghamshire to commit the crime, had entered his property by forcing a window to be met by the blast from a pump-action shotgun which the farmer illegally possessed. The older of the two intruders was hit in the legs but managed to escape. The younger was hit in the back and died from his injuries shortly afterwards in the grounds of the farmhouse. Press reports claimed that the case highlighted escalating rural crime and inadequacies in the funding of rural policing (Sapsted and Lusher 2000), issues which resonate with the concerns of suburban Uppenhall too.

Hough and Roberts (1998), in their analysis of attitudes to crime and punishment in the British Crime Survey, found that the public tend to overestimate crime levels and underestimate levels of sentencing. For example, eighty per cent of their sample thought that sentencing was too lenient, while eighty two per cent and sixty three per cent respectively were critical of the judiciary and magistrates (Hough and Roberts 1998). Vigilantism, where citizens take the law into their own hands as in Tony Martin's case, is one of the dire consequences of this perceived failure of law and order to provide security against crime (Donnison 1998).

Despite the conceptual uncertainty which surrounds the definition of vigilantism, 'opinion leaders are more than ready to make sweeping judgements about the social significance of vigilante activity' (Johnston 1996: 221). In fact, the national newspapers have already taken their stance on these issues. For instance, the editorial comment in the *Daily Telegraph* (22 April 2000: 25) criticised the police and criminal justice system for failing to take

account of what the ‘increasingly embattled public’ want, while a report in *The Guardian* warned of ‘validating a vigilante mentality’ based on the American example of gun culture serving both criminals and frightened public alike (Lawson 2000: 16).

‘BalACLavas and baseball bats’

Girling et al (2000: 176) aptly point out that ‘public participation in crime control can take some discriminatory and repressive forms’, and this was poignantly revealed in two cases of vigilantism related by Linda and Paul, a couple from Elm Close. Both incidents took place in other areas of Minington, but illustrate the potential for extreme action in excluding others who are perceived to be different or threatening. One incident occurred in a socially close-knit cul-de-sac in Colliers End on the eastern side of the town where Linda and Paul lived prior to moving to Uppenhall. ‘(We) had a problem with gypsies (although I gathered the problem was simply the gypsies’ presence) but they only stayed one night’ Linda explained:

The whole community (the men)....went...(to sort them out)....(and) set fire to one of the caravans. (The gypsies) were terrified, they were absolutely terrified. The lady that lived the other side of us was lovelyand she let them use her phone to phone the police (while) her husband was up with the men.....but (the gypsies) went, same night.

The second incident had come through local gossip. The incident occurred in Meadow View, an affluent suburb in northwest Minington. ‘(The residents) found out somebody was dealing in drugs and they dealt with it’ Linda said,

they’d just had enough, they wrecked the car with baseball bats...they smashed every window. They didn’t hurt the people, they just wrecked the car (of the person) that was dealing in the drugs and once that was gone the attraction for everyone else was gone but, yeah, it was the local residents. Nobody knew who (did it)....they were all wearing balACLavas (so) it was very difficult to say who’d done what....and they told (the drug dealers) that if they ever came back again they’d do the same again. They didn’t come back.

This second incident was ‘an example which bears all of the hallmarks of ‘typical’ vigilante activity: the pursuit of criminal deviants, the righting of a criminal wrong by violent and informal means, the leaving of a warning.....for others who might possess similar criminal dispositions’ (Johnston 1996: 220).

Although both of the incidents described above achieved the same ends they were essentially different modes of vigilantism. The second example focused on ‘crime control’, while the first was more concerned with ‘social control’, or the maintenance of communal order and values (Johnston 1996: 228). Johnston’s definition of vigilantism as ‘a reaction to real or perceived deviance’ applies to vigilante acts involving gypsies, which are often justified as crime control owing to the criminogenic reputation of gypsies and travellers (Johnston 1996: 229). Although it was not specifically mentioned, I have little doubt that this would have been the rationale for the actions of the Colliers End residents.

‘A gate....on the end’

Another extreme reaction to perceived difference and threat is the retreat of affluent people into enclaves separated off, privatised and made secure from the outside world. There is increasing privatisation of public space (Bottoms and Wiles 1996b; France and Wiles 1998; Reiner and Cross 1991) as the boundaries between public and private are being redrawn (Johnston 1991). In the context of my study some culs-de-sac were designed to appear private, but were in fact still accessible to anyone who cared to enter and the residents therefore had little power to bar access. In this section I want to examine how my research illustrated the extent to which residents might wish to gain the power to make their immediate environments private and thus enable them to control entry.

Giddens (1984) argues that power is directly implied in human action because it is the means by which things get done. Farrall and Bowling (1999: 256) point out that 'power...relates to the individual's (or group's) ability to be able to 'structure' the behaviour of themselves and others, and to be able to resist the 'structuring' capabilities of others'. Farrall and Bowling acknowledge that the power to 'structure' and to 'be structured' is not evenly distributed throughout society and this is particularly evident in relation to place, since spatial structures are the embodiment of power relations (Sibley 1995). Thus, as Sibley suggests, people's autonomy as thinking and acting agents allows a certain capacity to change their environment, or maintain and reproduce it in its existing form 'if it embodies social values which individuals or groups have both the power and the capacity to retain' (Sibley 1995: 76).

The Coniston Close residents had discussed the possibility of installing a gate at the top of the cul-de-sac. 'We always said we'd have a gate put on the end' Sonia said 'because sometimes...we've noticed the odd people....driving up and driving down. We're not being paranoid I don't think, but you always think what are (they) doing, why are (they) driving up and down this close? (They're) not going to stop anywhere so...what're (they) looking for?'. Sonia's comment illustrates how the enclave, by restricting access, heightens fear of strangers (Steventon 1996), particularly when it fails to keep them at bay.

The gate was intended to exclude general access to the close and to increase security yet its efficacy as a crime prevention measure was probably limited. Local rumour suggested that criminals were more likely to use the school playing fields or the railway line as an entry point and escape route. 'You've always got that sort of exit over the back fence' Doug pointed out, 'they use that railway line to get big goods and stuff along because I've heard it said that they take them along the railway line and stash them in the hedges and go down

with a van and pick them up later'. Doug's comment illustrates the power of myth and rumour in shaping people's fears. It was the fear of intrusion from the school playing fields or railway line that made David and Karen feel vulnerable in their house in the corner of the close. Being 'right at the edge' David suggested put them at greater risk of crime which a gate would not have alleviated. 'We were (more) worried about people climbing over the fence' he said. 'You could actually come over the fields unseen, climb over the back fence, break into this house technically and be away and nobody would be any the wiser.' David and Karen's vulnerability at the edge of the close relates to their preoccupation with security which I discussed in chapter 6.

A gate at the top of the close in the early days of the development not only would have demarcated Sonia and her neighbours' territory, but would also have eased Sonia's feelings of vulnerability when few of the houses were occupied and large numbers of people were coming to view the houses. 'I was more paranoid at the beginning' she said,

because....once all the homes were sold we were still getting a lot of people coming into the close. Next door was....a showhome and it was horrible because people would come, start looking through our windows. They didn't realise that ours wasn't a showhome.....but we put a stop to that, (the builders) had to put a sign out in the end but once...(the buildings were) all finished there were still people walking up and down the road and having a look through the windows and I was a bit paranoid about that.

However, crime was not Sonia's only worry. She was concerned about the loss of privacy with the multitude of visitors to the cul-de-sac. A gate would not only protect privacy but it would also exclude the nuisance and inconvenience of unwanted vehicular traffic in the close. The neighbouring school, for example, attracted a lot of cars as parents ferried their children to and from school. 'We did have a lot of trouble....at one stage....and it was really bad' Sonia pointed out:

I came home ill one day and couldn't get in the....house. I was very upset about it, they'd just parked right across my drive. I said "is that your car?" and (the woman) said "yes". I said "well, could you move it because you're (blocking my drive)" and I just got a load of verbal abuse. She did actually move the car but I thought I don't need this....I should be able to drive into my own drive without worrying about the time....and even now I try not to drive home between sort of quarter past three and quarter to four because sometimes you just can't move.

In the final outcome the idea of the gate was dropped. Rather than resulting from 'local cultural sensibilities' about any potential negative image a gate would create (Girling et al 2000: 168), the practical difficulties of managing the gate and deciding who should or should not be excluded eventually led to the idea being discarded. Trying to decide who were genuine callers and who had no business in the close is difficult enough (Steventon 1996). 'You can't unfortunately differentiate' Sonia said. 'I don't....know whose friends are coming down,

I don't check every car that comes in the close...but you do find that a lot of people come down and stop and then go back up'...but you can't differentiate, there's no way and if we had a gate, who'd you give the key to? If you're going to have automatic gates or whatever....it's expensive. We did talk about it and one of the people (in the close) said "well, we've got....the lay-by (outside the close), people could park in there and walk down"....but I thought no, I couldn't really ask my family and friends "leave your car up the road and (walk)"....(but) we did talk about it at one stage.

A gate would have 'structured' the behaviour of people visiting the cul-de-sac. Control of entry would have been in the hands of the residents. However, the residents' failure to agree on a strategy concerning the extent to which that power should be wielded (for instance, collective vested interests mediated by individual vested interests) kept Coniston Close from becoming gated.

The tide turning back?

Do the anxieties of affluent middle England concerning law and order (Girling et al 2000) necessarily signal an ineluctable move towards more active, retributive local informal controls where communities take the law into their

own hands? Certainly, in some quarters there is concern over the use of private patrols in place of the public police because they are carried out by unregulated private security companies (Johnston 1991; Jones and Newburn 1996; Shearing 1996), or private citizens who assume public powers (Johnston 1991). The problem with vigilantism is one of control, since as the case of Tony Martin illustrates, citizens are untrained and the law may be broken, but the politicisation of law and order makes it increasingly difficult to define how far such behaviour needs to be controlled (Johnston 1991).

Some commentators foresee a potentially bleak future for civil society if the trends outlined above accelerate (eg. Bottoms and Wiles 1996a; 1996b; Girling et al 2000). There are, however, indications of the tide turning back a little way towards a more democratic and humanitarian response to crime and society's ills (Girling et al 2000; Loader 1999). Research into the effects of crime and social change in Macclesfield, for example, found that despite public concern about the trends in formal policing, 'these dissatisfied customers remain reluctant to look elsewhere in search of the patrolling presence they desire' (Girling et al 2000: 165). Levels of crime were not high enough to provoke greater reliance on private security patrols. Moreover, lack of trust in the private security industry and an affective attachment to the public police as a social institution prevented local residents from collectively mobilising their resources towards security measures, especially in ways which would impact negatively on their sense of place (Girling et al 2000).

In the context of my study the individualised and disorganised nature of social life, and diverse views about the crime 'problem' and crime threat, meant that there was a lack of consensus to implement collective means of crime control, even in the superficially socially cohesive environment of Coniston Close. One brake on vigilantism may be attributed to what Giddens (1984: 18) terms

‘rules’ and ‘resources’. Rules ‘are the everyday guidelines which allow individuals to continue their day to day existences’ while resources are ‘something that social actors can rely on and use in achieving certain ends’ (Farrall and Bowling 1999: 256). According to Giddens (1984), rules cannot be conceptualised apart from resources, which means that the structuring aspects of society not only constrain, but also enable social action. I want to focus on the constraining influence of rules. Vigilantism and confrontation risk stepping outside the law, as Martin from Poplar Drive found to his cost when he used force to deal with ‘kids jumping up the fence’ and became the subject of a complaint to the police.

Though Giddens (1979: 67) suggests ‘to know a rule is to ‘know how to go on’’, frequently this is not the case. The constraining influence of rules may be derived as much from the fact that rules are not always clear and straightforward as it is from individuals understanding the boundaries of their actions. As Johnston (1996: 232) points out, there are problems in ‘taking the law into (one’s) own hands’ regarding its definition as an illegal act. Simon, who had spent his life working in the courts and therefore felt he knew something about the law, acknowledged the dilemma. ‘What happens if you’re burgled and you happen to be in the house at the time of the burglary....what would you do...what would your gut reaction be?’ he asked,

It’s an interesting point....I’ve often thought about this, do you open the door and say “clear off?” Do you confront them with some form of.... instrument? There is a tendency that you’d have a go...but whether it’s advisable to do that because....(you) take the law into your own hands and as a result...well, of course, the law states that you can use reasonable force and the question mark is what is reasonable under the circumstances when you’re confronted with someone or something.

A further influence on vigilantism is gender. In the example of the Colliers End vigilantes it was the men who got together to carry out the assault on the gypsies. It was Martin, or Bob, or Paul who went into the play area in Willow

Close to angrily remonstrate with the youths (see chapter 4). 'I can lose me temper quite quickly' Paul said,

especially when it's involving me family or me property and....some of these youths....there's only one way of putting things over. There was a particular incident....it was about eight-o'clock at night and we were just going to get in the car (to go to Wales) and over comes these stones...hit the driveway etc. and we could hear them all shouting and everything so....I weren't gonna ask any questions, I just went round and told them what I thought, more or less threatening behaviour but I weren't gonna stand for it.

The men's actions described above were an assertion of a public masculine identity which allowed them to exercise hegemonic masculine dominance in the social situations described (Goodey 1997). As Goodey (1997: 401) points out:

Male 'emotional illiteracy' affects men 'as individuals, as a group and as part of society. It triggers a form of masculine bravado or fearlessness which can, in turn, display itself as reactive aggression against the self (the denial of one's own vulnerability) and others in the display of verbally and physically aggressive acts'.

However, exaggerated masculinities are also associated with crime (Goodey 1997), and the vigilantism against the gypsies illustrates the fine line between control and crime when masculinity overrides sensitivity and sensibility.

Linda's (like Norma's - see chapter 4) reaction was different. 'I don't actually condone that (physical approach), I think there's got to be another way because if you do that then that's all you teach them....you don't teach them anything other than what they already know'. Linda's comments link with Giddens' (1984) position-practices, or 'behaviours normally expected from a particular individual as a result of their social identity' (Farrall and Bowling 1999: 256). Linda suggested that violence breeds violence and this was inappropriate behaviour in the context of the 'civilised suburb'. If Linda and Norma's less confrontational attitudes begin to influence the men's approaches to dealing

with public 'problems', then gender could positively impact on violent exclusionary practices and responses to crime.

While Girling et al (2000: 176) found a rejection of the idea that human safety can be 'privatized, deregulated and generally placed upon the shoulders of individuals', I too found instances of resistance. For example, Sarah and Vicky, the teenagers who liked to 'hang out in the local park' had noticed a marked change in the attitudes and behaviour of their peers. 'Lately it's got really stupid' Sarah admitted,

everybody's getting beaten up lately....like people just want to go down there (to the park) just to....fight people. To start off with everyone just wanted to go round to like....play with their friends, you used to go down the park and just sit down and have a laugh....and now it's got stupid, it's just really getting out of hand 'cos.....all the time people...think they're clever if they're talking about draw (cannabis) or booze or whatever.

The indulgence in violence and drug-taking of some members of Sarah and Vicky's social group took the fun out of socialising in the park and Sarah and Vicky voted with their feet. The fact that they acknowledged the change, became disenchanted and withdrew illustrates the power of agency when individuals have the ability to control their destinies. It also highlights the power of structural influences which gave Sarah and Vicky boundaries beyond which they were reluctant to step too far when the fun and excitement became a threat to their wellbeing and their futures.

Social and ethnic homogeneity, communication and trust between individuals are thought to be social conditions which are most likely to give rise to extreme forms of crime control, such as organised vigilantism (Johnston 1996). However, I found little evidence of 'collective efficacy' (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999: 603) in that respect. While there were some localised examples of social solidarity which could give rise to collective, privatised

efforts at crime control, such as plans for a gate to control entry to Coniston Close, these were not organised, or consensual, enough, to realise such ambitions as the Coniston Close residents found. The brake on privatised and extreme forms of crime control may in some circumstances result from ‘inclusive and participatory’ community processes involving ‘democratic deliberation’ as Girling et al (2000: 176) discovered, but in the context of the affluent suburb I studied, the exclusive and individualistic processes I observed appeared to have a similar effect.

Social and spatial alternatives?

In this final section I briefly highlight two debates which have relevance to many of the issues raised in this study: communitarianism (eg. Etzioni 1993; 1995), and the ‘responsive environments’ approach to the design of urban environments (Bentley et al 1985). Both debates are interrelated because they bring together social and spatial factors which, as this study has shown, impact on crime and informal social control, and on social divisions and inequities which I have argued underpin fear of crime and exclusionary attitudes in residential areas. Communitarianism purportedly offers a solution to social conditions of atomisation, individualism and indifference (Etzioni 1993; Kingdom 1992), and crime control through reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite 1989). Permeable environments are considered more equitable because they allow access for all in towns and cities (Bentley et al 1985; Steventon 1996).

Shared morals and values

Communitarianism is based on a belief that ‘communities are social webs of people who know one another as persons and have a moral voice. Communities draw on interpersonal bonds to encourage members to abide by shared values’ (Etzioni 1995: ix). According to Sennett (1998), communitarianism intends that moral standards are strengthened by trust, mutual responsibility and

commitment leading to an emotional fulfillment that cannot be achieved by isolated individuals. Etzioni (1995) acknowledges the need to balance individual rights and social responsibilities since individualism has become an excessive and non-beneficial force in society. An individual sense of entitlement, for example, demands that 'the community provide(s) more services and strongly upholds rights - coupled with a rather weak sense of obligation to the national and local community' (Etzioni 1993: 3).

Young (1999) argues that the communitarian approach exemplified by the American Dream emphasises individuality since, in a system of equal opportunity, individual qualities determine success or failure. Young (1999: 22) states: 'In the American Dream the ideal is equality of opportunity: all get a chance to compete in the meritocratic race, but it is the winners who get the prizes and the losers who naturally do not'. The system is legal and political rather than social (Young 1999) or based on human nature (Bauman 2000); a system predicated on ethnicity and ethnic homogeneity which essentialises identity and reinforces similarity and difference (Bauman 2000; Young 1999). However, as Bauman (2000: 176) notes, 'the aspect in which we are all alike is decidedly more significant and consequential than everything that sets us apart from one another'.

Etzioni's view of community is 'not one of integration but of overarching values and shared sentiments' (Young 1999: 22-23), based on a 'tight intermeshing control' (Young 1999: 160). As Bauman (2000) argues, communitarianism offers a 'safe haven' amidst the ontological insecurity-invoking conditions of late modern society (see chapter 1). Bauman might be describing the type of psychological shelter afforded by the physical and symbolic boundaries around Uppenhall which I outlined in chapter 3 when he writes:

Th(e) communal world is complete in so far as all the rest is irrelevant; more exactly, hostile - a wilderness full of ambushes and conspiracies and bristling with enemies, wielding chaos as their main weapons. The inner harmony of the communal world shines and glitters against the background of the obscure and tangled jungle which starts on the other side of the turnpike. It is there, to that wilderness, that people huddling in the warmth of shared identity dump (or hope to banish) the fears which prompted them to seek communal shelter.

(Bauman 2000: 172)

Although Etzioni (1993: 122) acknowledges the need to 'balance both diversity and unity', the inclusiveness implied by the communitarian view of 'community' based on shared morals and values reinforces a singular identity which rejects difference (Young 1999), as my discussions of the renting family in Ash Close and the youths in the Willow Close play area aptly illustrate (see chapters 3 and 4 respectively).

Rather than superficially sharing values, Sennett (1998: 143) argues for the confrontation of difference: 'strong bonding between people means engaging over time their differences'. Quoting Lewis Coser's classic essay *The functions of Social Conflict*, Sennett writes:

People are bound together more by verbal conflict than by verbal agreement, at least immediate agreement. In conflict, they have to work harder at communicating; as often happens in labor (sic) or diplomatic negotiations, gradually the ground rules of engagement bind the contending parties together...Differences of views often become sharper and more explicit even though the parties may eventually come to agreement: the scene of conflict becomes a community in the sense that people learn how to listen and respond to one another even as they more keenly feel their differences.

(Sennett 1998: 143)

Sennett (1998) maintains that the bonds created by the negotiation of difference are far stronger than communitarian values. He argues that citizens should be forced to confront difference, for example by allowing the police to deal with organised crime and leaving citizens to deal with petty crime (Sennett 1971). This approach is already a way of life for people living in diverse and heterogeneous social environments blighted by crime. However, it is an

approach which would no doubt send shock waves through the suburbs. Sennett's suggestion may increase informal social control but would more likely increase fears to the point of reinforcing extreme defensive and exclusionary attitudes, possibly with dire consequences as my earlier discussion has shown.

'Responsive environments'

As part of his communitarian approach, Etzioni (1993: 128) advocates the promotion of 'design that is pro-community'. He calls for spaces which foster sociability; places in localities where people can 'get to know one another'. The play area in Willow Close (see chapter 4) demonstrated the contribution public space can make to the social life (and informal social control) of the locality, depending on its relationship with surrounding dwellings. This relationship can influence the way in which residents identify with spaces; whether they feel spaces 'belong' to them, or are an anonymous source of annoyance. Etzioni (1993: 129) cites developments which are 'designed around courtyards' as an example of ways in which design can enhance social interaction.

However, courtyards and culs-de-sac militate against what Bentley et al (1985: 12) call 'permeability' and therefore the 'responsiveness' of the built environment. Bentley et al (1985: 9 - italics in original) argue that designers should consider 'the *form* implications of their social and political ideals....(and) that the manmade (sic) environment is a political system *in its own right*'. Responsive environments are those which provide all users with an essentially democratic setting, offering opportunities by maximising the degree of choice available (Bentley et al 1985). Permeability depends on the number of alternative routes through public space available to get from one point to another (Bentley et al 1985). A system of small blocks of buildings arranged on a basic grid street system in which all routes are clearly legible and visible

offers the most permeable and therefore accessible urban form (Bentley et al 1985).

As the recent forum entitled 'Open plan cities' in *Architecture Today* (October 2000, 112: 4) stated, 'openness and permeability are widely promoted as objectives of urban and architectural design. Too often however the requirements of security and privacy - not to mention lack of imagination and simple mean-spiritedness - come to weigh stronger in the final decisions'. The debates about access and security have had considerable influence on environmental criminology and are therefore worth re-examining. Crime prevention policymakers do not favour accessibility because they claim it allows easy access and escape for criminals (Home Office Crime Prevention Centre 1994). For this reason policymakers prefer culs-de-sac, despite the fact that terraced housing, for example, in grid-pattern streets provide good surveillance opportunities, and a greater possibility for residents in adjacent streets to come into contact with each other (Steventon 1996).

Research has shown that accessibility does not necessarily lead to greater crime. Hillier and Shu's (1999) study, which I have mentioned earlier (see also chapter 2), highlights how public realm activity together with good intervisibility between properties provides natural surveillance which helps prevent crime. However, as others have consistently argued (eg. Brantingham and Brantingham 1984; 1991), crime risk is related to offenders' routine patterns of activity rather than accessibility *per se*. Most crime occurs in fairly predictable ways along certain routes or pathways across an urban landscape and focuses on specific 'attractors' and 'generators', creating 'hot spots' of crime (Brantingham and Brantingham 1984; Rondeau 2000). Greater permeability may increase crime in certain locations because it removes some of the physical barriers which prevent movement between adjacent areas

(Brantingham and Brantingham 2000). Since social differences are also important barriers to crime, permeability is unlikely to result in offenders' penetration of neighbourhoods that are 'substantially different in social, economic or demographic character from the offender's home neighbourhood' (Brantingham and Brantingham 2000: 9).

Market forces

The property market may be an obstacle to the production of more equitable urban environments. As I argued in chapter 1, the influence of the property market favours the affluent and marginalises the poor, and reflects people's preferences. Research has shown that developers build culs-de-sac to satisfy 'market forces', rather than for crime prevention (Steventon 1994: 91). Indeed, of the twenty households in my Uppenhall study, residents in five specifically stated security as a reason for moving to a cul-de-sac. Residents in another three, all with children, chose a cul-de-sac for safety from traffic. The remainder stated other priorities, such as the particular property, or the attraction of the location.

Concerns other than crime, such as global environmental issues concerning land use and energy conservation, may eventually override 'market forces' and change urban environments. As Cozens et al (1999) point out, the notion of sustainable development offers potential to combat urban decay and crime by interdisciplinary effort. Furthermore, recent government proposals for building greater density developments on urban 'brownfield' sites may yet be a challenge to suburban growth. Mixing compatible land uses, such as commercial, residential and leisure in areas small enough to encourage pedestrian activity (Lennertz 1991), could provide benefits in terms of social interaction and security (Hillier et al 1983; Jacobs 1961). How much these

moves will impact on exclusive and exclusionary residential developments remains to be seen.

Endnote

The aim of this research was to explore the dynamics of informal social control and the social and physical influences which impact upon it. I have highlighted a complex relationship between the social and spatial factors which shape people's perceptions of their locality and the wider world, and influence their actions. While my study was small-scale it has raised some interesting issues concerning the context specific dynamics of fear, particularly the micro-contextual nature of gendered feelings of safety and vulnerability, and informal social control and their implications for community crime prevention. More research needs to be conducted on these issues to further our understanding of informal social control and derive greater efficacy from community crime prevention programmes.

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Methodological Appendix

Introduction

In chapter 2 I outlined the methods used to access data in the field, namely observation, participant observation and in-depth interviews. The purpose of this appendix is to enlarge upon these processes, with particular reference to how they were used in conjunction and how the resultant data were combined. Since my interview data formed the main underpinning of the analysis and interpretation processes, and observation and participant observation were used to support, corroborate and reinforce the interview data, I shall describe the interview schedule and the nature of the questions asked. I aim to show how some topics of enquiry, such as fear of crime, often arose from other lines of enquiry, such as reasons for moving to the estate, rather than any direct questioning on my part.

I also highlight an apparent dichotomy between people's fear of crime and strangers and their seemingly lack of concern about my presence as an 'outsider' during periods of observation, especially since fear of strangers was an issue which surfaced in some interviews. I shall argue that this dichotomy reflects the moral minimalism that Baumgartner (1988) observed in her study of an affluent American suburb, in which high fear of crime and strangers was matched by an absence of confrontation and avoidance of conflict.

Linking the research methods

While three methods of data gathering were used to conduct the fieldwork, they were to some extent carried out simultaneously. Many of my observations took place with little or no contact with residents in situations where I used my motor vehicle as a vantage point from which to observe particular areas. However, carrying out observations was not always a static process involving taking snapshots of individual places at particular points in time. Instead, observations were also dynamic; they were carried out during walks through

the area, when travelling around with the community beat police officer, during visits to conduct interviews, and indeed during the interviews themselves.

Just as observations formed part of interviewing, to some extent interviewing was linked to participant observation. During my visits to people's homes with the community beat police officer I was afforded the opportunity to talk to the residents and ask a few questions. The police officer introduced me as a student conducting research in the area and therefore residents were aware that my questions were not related to police business. People's reactions to me were friendly and helpful, although accompanying the police officer may have been beneficial in this respect. It certainly facilitated access for follow-up interviews with some of those residents, which allowed me to expand on my brief questioning in the initial visits (for example, interviews with Bob and Mary and Betty and Joy came from visits with the community beat police officer, and interviews with Martin, Jonathan and Sandy, Muriel, and Linda and Paul resulted from the residents' meeting).

An interview strategy

Prior to the fieldwork I had devised a basic strategy for questioning which I intended to apply in the interview process. First my intention was to elicit some background information relating to the interviewees, such as age group, length of residence in the area and their motivation for moving to their current property. In some circumstances (for example Rose, Bob and Betty) these general questions led to some rich biographical data, although during the interviews with Bob and Betty I was particularly concerned about the value of the amount of time expended on their backgrounds in relation to the relevance of the data gained. It was only later during the analysis of certain case studies, such as the Willow Close play area that I came to realise the benefits of this biographical data.

Following the background questions my enquiry formed two broad themes: an examination of life on the estate, including social life, social networks and neighbour relations, and an exploration of attitudes to and perceptions of crime and its effects on people's lives. Within these general lines of enquiry I hoped to elicit data on a range of topics, including how people related to and regarded their environment, the actions they took to protect themselves from crime, and the influence of fear of crime.

My intention was to keep the basic predetermined questions as broad as possible (eg: what is life like on the estate? - how do you feel about crime locally and in wider society?) in order not to place too many limits on the direction the interviews might take. Rather than me initiating any discussion on fear of crime I hoped the subject would arise naturally from other lines of enquiry; in other words, my specific questioning about fear of crime would follow rather than lead the direction the discussions took. As it happened, in several interviews fear of crime emerged early in the interview as a factor influencing choice of location, or the decision to move from a previous location. For example, Neil and Cathy chose to live in Uppenhall because they felt they would be safer from crime. Similarly, David and Karen were attracted to the high level of security in their house. Lisa moved to the area because she perceived it as a 'nice area...as in low crime' and hearing local gossip about crime influenced her uneasiness and eventual 'panic'. Being the victim of burglary influenced Muriel's decision to move from her previous house. The quietness of their current location was a main attraction for Mike and Jenny but also made Jenny feel 'vulnerable' when at home alone during the day.

Allowing a certain freedom in the direction an interview could take also meant that I had to 'think on my feet' as each interview progressed. Although interviews followed different courses, however, they broadly gave rise to

similar data. By asking open-ended questions I was able to avoid leading interviewees in ways that satisfied my preconceptions of middle class, suburban life. This approach allowed a much fairer comparison between the interview data and the data from my observations and participant observation, bearing in mind the prejudices about suburban life that I brought to the field, which may have influenced my interpretation of what I observed.

The researcher as a stranger

My observations revealed a dearth of activity within the culs-de-sac for prolonged periods, both in the daytime and evenings, particularly during the week. Thus, observational data supported people's accounts in interviews of their busy schedules away from the estate, or their private existences in their homes. The extent of their fear of crime and strangers, however, was more difficult to determine from observations alone, particularly by their reactions to me as a stranger and 'outsider' in their midst. While concerns about me as a stranger (and particularly a male stranger) were voiced in interviews (eg. Betty; Fiona), my presence as an observer did not give rise to any direct challenge; I was never asked who I was or what I was up to.

That, of course, is not to say that I was not noticed. Many of my observations were conducted from my vehicle: in the earlier stages of the fieldwork a white Landrover and in the latter an old green Citroen 2CV, both of which were fairly incongruous in the context of suburbia. As Doug in Coniston Close suggested, strangers to the close would be 'clocked' by a number of residents before they could progress very far. If I was 'clocked' on any of my visits to Coniston Close it was never made apparent to me, although I did wonder how many eyes might be upon me without me knowing. However, on one occasion when I spent an hour in the Landrover in the intimate surroundings of the Ash Close courtyard, four people came out of their houses, got into their cars and drove

off, apparently not noticing me as they drove by. Instead their attention appeared to be focused on their own worlds.

Clearly there seemed to be a dichotomy between the data that came out of interviews, which suggested a fear of ‘outsiders’ and strangers, a theme that I develop in the thesis (see particularly chapter 3), and the apparent disregard for my presence as an observer. However, I argue that this dichotomy is reflected in the paradoxical nature of suburban life identified by Baumgartner (1988). In her study of Hampton, an east coast American suburb, she observed high fear of crime and strangers and, at the same time, an avoidance of conflict and confrontation and a reluctance to get involved. I observed the same culture of moral minimalism in respect of certain aspects of Uppenhall life, which may explain the divergence between what people told me in interviews and what I experienced when carrying out observations.